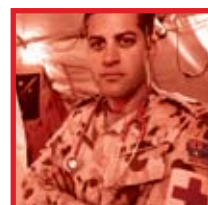




An Historical Analysis of the 'Incessant Disputes in the Tribal Areas' (of the North-West Frontier) against the British (and the British Indian Army) from 1893 to 1939

Colonel Graeme Sligo, Australian Army
October 2012

This paper was prepared for submission to the National Defense University (NDU) of Pakistan, where the author was a student in 2011-12. A substantially abridged and edited version, titled 'Counterinsurgency Lessons from the North-West Frontier', was published in the *ADF Journal*, Issue No. 190 (February/March 2013), pp. 44-52. Both are published with kind permission of the NDU.



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An Historical Analysis of the 'Incessant Disputes in the Tribal Areas' (of the North-West Frontier) against the British (and the British Indian Army) from 1893 to 1939

29 February 2012

by: Colonel G. Sligo (L/N 165)
Copy of 4

ABSTRACT

The British, civil and military, were engaged on the frontier of British India from the 1830s, and on the North-West Frontier from 1849 to 1947. The 19th Century was punctuated by unfortunate British forays into Afghanistan, until the negotiation of the Durand Line in 1893. From Curzon's time as Viceroy (circa 1901), British policy on the North-West Frontier changed.

While the study of history does not convey direct lessons for the present, the British approach to the North-West Frontier from 1901 to 1939 was a compelling example, from the point-of-view of British national interests, that political, diplomatic, civil and military means can work together to achieve a grand strategic objective – the security of British India from foreign government incursions. The paper summarizes, in a condensed form, British actions by “the politicals” and the Army on the North-West Frontier, and the historical example of Waziristan is explored.

There was strong British engagement (often with mutual respect) with the Pushtun tribes, but the effects were also destructive, particularly when authority was delegated to the Army for periods of time. The disputes between the British and the tribes were not necessarily incessant. The paper argues (from the British perspective) that, from about 1901 to 1939, the British were successful strategically on the North-West Frontier of India because of: good analysis of the problem within a strategic context of ends and means; the deep knowledge of its civil and military officers on the region and its languages; workable civil-military co-operation and sound administrative structures; and the intelligent application of non-military and military power and influence, including the application of periods of intense military violence.

The paper is not an assessment from the Pushtun perspective, and more studies of this aspect are needed. This paper has been researched from the perspective of British national interests, in a particular historical period. The paper is an historical and strategic analysis.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND NOTE

I wish to acknowledge and thank my sponsors at the National Defence University of Pakistan, Islamabad. They were: initially Brigadier Sarfraz Ali; and subsequently Air Commodore Usaid ur Rehman Usmani.

My thanks to the National Defence University Library for all their assistance in obtaining books and materials, including the report on British operations in Waziristan in 1919-1920. I acknowledge all the assistance from the various works studied; in particular, I was fortunate to receive a pre-publication copy of Mr Christian Tripodi's book on "the politicals", *Edge of Empire*, which has since been published.

A number of map images and photographs, commonly available to all on the internet, have been included to illustrate some of the personalities, and the websites concerned have been acknowledged. The purpose of this work is academic study and research (it is not for commercial publication), and the paper is set within the context of its historical period, from 1893 to 1939. The main body of the paper (including bibliography) is 21,215 words.

The Australian Defence College wishes to acknowledge that this document was originally prepared for submission to the National Defence University of Pakistan by the Australian student studying there in 2011-12. The Australian Defence College, in reproducing this document for the purpose of study and research, thanks the National Defence University of Pakistan for its concurrence.

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(Courtesy www.frontierwhoiswhi.com/data/thumbnails/1olafcaroe.JPG)

ABBREVIATIONS

ACF – armed civil forces (the Scouts and police under the control of “the politicals”).
FCR – Frontier Crimes Regulations.
GOC – General Officer Commanding.
NWFP – North-West Frontier Province.
RAF – Royal Air Force.
SOPs – Standard Operating Procedures
SWS – South Waziristan Scouts.

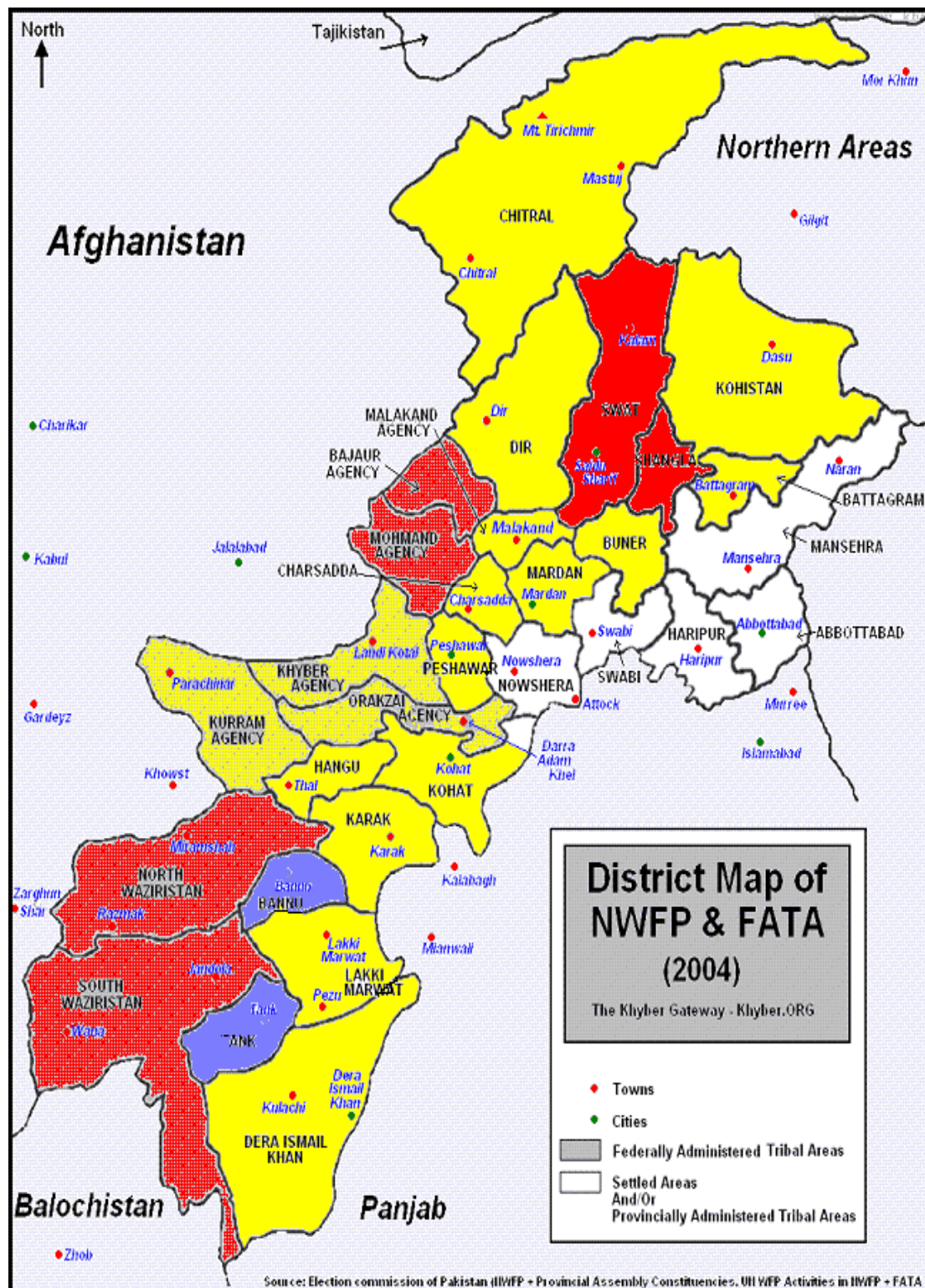
A NOTE ON OTHER LITERATURE, AND THE ROOM FOR NEW RESEARCH

There are general histories of the Indian Army, regimental histories, some contemporary studies such as Churchill's *The Story of the Malakand Field Force*, and some works on general methods of so-called 'pacification' by the Royal Air Force and the Army. There is a vast literature on the politics of British India, particularly from the year 1919 on. There are a number of memoirs and autobiographies covering the period, and some works on the particular campaigns. There are some official histories, such as on Waziristan 1919-1920, and some material on the Faqir of Ipi (1897-1960).

There are a large number of books and articles on the North-West Frontier generally, but not many works with this particular focus of examining what the civil-military process - the (British) Government of India and the Indian Army - learnt from this experience, particularly their assessment of the tribes themselves.

An important exception is the recent publication of Christian Tripodi's *Edge of Empire*, which examines the political agents and some military aspects of British policy and practice on the North-West Frontier. As well, Charles Chenevix-Trench's *The Frontier Scouts* examines one aspect of the political approach.

The present paper attempts, in a 21,000 word format, from the British perspective, to fill a gap in much of the literature. There are not too many studies in this format covering a brief political and military history (political, diplomatic, civil and military) of the North-West Frontier (1893-1939), as well as putting this within a strategic framework.



1 – Contemporary Map of FATA and KPK.
(Courtesy www.longwarjournal.org)



3 - Waziri Tribesman, 1919
(Courtesy UK National Army Museum, www.nam.ac.uk/images Photographer:
Randolph Bezzant Holmes (1888-1973))

Chapter 1
Introduction: To 1901: Grand Strategy and the Problem of Securing British
India

An analysis of the incessant disputes in the (north-west) tribal areas of British India (1890s to 1939) was about grand strategy. It should begin with a description of the grand strategic problem faced by the British and British India.

From the 1830s to the 1920s, the British in India grappled with the problem of security of the borders of British India, particularly the western and north-western frontiers. British India fought three wars in Afghanistan, 1838-42, 1878-81 and in 1919. The principal problem with which the British were grappling was the problem of Russian expansionism. The Russian Empire was expanding for a variety of complex reasons, and the British understanding of this expansion was essentially correct. At different points in the 19th Century, Russian actions in Central Asia, on the borders of Afghanistan, or towards Kabul itself, prompted British counter-measures, including military action into Afghanistan. As Henry Kissinger has written:

Paradox was Russia's most distinguishing feature. Constantly at war and expanding in every direction, it nevertheless considered itself permanently threatened. The more polyglot the empire became, the more vulnerable Russia felt, partly because of its need to isolate the various nationalities from their neighbours.¹

and

For, in the course of the nineteenth century, the notion that Russia was the principal threat to Great Britain's position in the world had taken firm hold. Great Britain had perceived its overseas interests menaced by a Russian pincer movement, one prong of which was aimed at Constantinople and the other at India via Central Asia.²

Coupled with Russian actions, in the 19th Century, British India had expanded west and north towards and across the River Indus. In 1849, the British had defeated the

¹ Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Touchstone (Paperback), 1994), 140.

² Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, 151.

Sikhs at the battle of Gujrat and incorporated the province of Punjab, initially under a Board of Administration and later under a Lieutenant-Governor. A British army had travelled through Balochistan as part of its movement through the Bolan Pass in 1839 for the First Afghan War. Post-war the British had sought to influence the Balochi local rulers, in large part because the Bolan Pass represented a back-door into India for an invader. British influence in Balochistan was greatly furthered by Sir Robert Sandeman, and by 1887 the area had been declared British territory.

A great debate raged throughout the 19th Century, in the capital of British India and in London, on the correct policy for securing the northern and western approaches to British India. Was a “forward policy” best – with British control of Kabul and Kandahar, or was the “close border policy” to be preferred? Of course, sporadic British military operations in Afghanistan had upset the border tribes, both for economic (protection and escort money) reasons and because the tribes had always enjoyed de facto independence, both from Kabul and from the Indian side of the so-called “border”.³

The British did move early into two key areas of the North-West Frontier, Khyber and Kurram. (This was in addition to Sandeman’s efforts in Baluchistan.) The Khyber Pass was key terrain and on the eve of the Anglo-Afghan War of 1878, the British had come to an agreement with local maliks (in return for subsidies) and Afghan government forces were excluded from the area.⁴ (In 1879, a political officer, Robert Warburton, was appointed and during the 1880s the Khyber Rifles was raised.) The Kurram area is a geographical salient jutting into Afghanistan and one tribe, the Turi Pushtun, were Shia and subject to attacks from the neighbouring Sunni tribes. They sought British protection in 1892. This was fortuitous for the British, as they had discovered that the tribes of Waziristan were formidable, and British influence in the Kurram (in 1892 they appointed a political agent, Roos-Keppel) was a means of

³ Lieutenant Andrew Wegener, *A Complex and Changing Dynamic: Afghan Responses to Foreign Intervention 1878 – 2006* (Canberra: Land Warfare Studies Centre, April 2007), 49, (copy in possession of the author).

⁴ Olaf Caroe, *The Pathans 550 BC – AD 1957* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958 (Karachi: Oxford in Asia Reprint 1983)), 374-375..

dividing, by territory and influence, the Afridis and Orakzais in the north from the Wazirs and Mahsuds (in the south).⁵

Eventually with the frontier, the British essentially settled for an India-centric policy because in 1881, after the Second Anglo-Afghan War, they had reached an accommodation with “the Iron Amir” of Afghanistan, Amir Abdur Rehman. He was to rule from 1880 to 1901. The Amir would exclude Russian influence from Afghanistan and allow Britain to predominate in Afghanistan’s foreign relations, in return for a large British annual subsidy. As a result the British did not need to garrison troops there, and were able to negotiate a boundary-line between British India and Afghanistan – the Durand Line.

The (ruthless) reign of the Iron Amir allowed the British to withdraw their troops from Afghanistan. As Henry Kissinger has remarked, Afghanistan “is a nation that ironically comes together primarily when there are foreigners in the country – to expel the foreigners.”⁶ Consequently, after 1881 and the British withdrawal, Afghans perceived the British not as invaders, but more as a partisan player in Afghan politics. At last the British had got the support of a powerful actor in Afghanistan.⁷

In 1893 the Durand Line was agreed between the Amir of Afghanistan and the Foreign Secretary of India, Sir Mortimer Durand. It was a compromise, and in its context and the competing interests of the day, it was probably the best compromise obtainable from the Amir of Afghanistan at that time. Whilst the line was agreed between the two states – British India and Afghanistan – the boundary line artificially divided the Pushtun tribes of the mountains - into two countries. For the British the Durand Line was sensible in defence terms, because the international boundary in its north-west was through extremely mountainous and militarily difficult country (for an invader), yet the British retained control and access to the major mountain passes, through which any invader would have to travel in order to invade British India.

⁵ Christian Tripodi, *Edge of Empire: The British Political Officer and Tribal Administration on the North-West Frontier of India 1877-1947* (pre-publication manuscript in possession of writer. I have included the Chapter, as the pagination is different in the advance copy.), Chapter 3, 128-129. In the Khyber, the Afridis initially provided (from about 1879/80) armed men for guarding and for service to the political officer. In 1888 the Khyber Rifles was raised.

⁶ Woodrow Wilson Center National Conversation Series – Henry Kissinger, “National Conversation Series – Afghanistan: Is There a Regional End Game?” (1 November 2011), www.wilsoncenter.net/.../National%20Conversations%20Series%20- (accessed 21 December 2011).

⁷ Wegener, *A Complex and Changing Dynamic*, 51-52.

It is important to note that the critical strategic issue for British India was not the North-West Frontier itself. The critical issue for the British – whether the Viceroy and Government in Calcutta or Delhi (after 1911), or the home Government in London – was the preservation of British rule in India and the security of India as a whole. The North-West Frontier was a means to an end, not an end in itself. The perspective or the view must be taken from Delhi – and not from Peshawar or Rawalpindi. Studying the British policy-makers and citing John Lewis Gaddis, Christian Tripodi has commented:

Consequently, attention was consistently focussed toward resolving the fundamental demand of the grand-strategic level; the effective and calculated relation of ends and means to achieve policy objectives.⁸

Whilst the British “lost” British India in 1947, they did so for political reasons beyond the scope of this paper. Those reasons included the devastating economic and social effects upon the British Empire of two debilitating world wars, the ideas of nationalism and anti-colonialism, the struggle for independence by India and Pakistan and the leadership of the independence leaders, and the liberal and constitutional concessions made by a variety of British Governments from 1909 to 1947. Yet in terms of the grand strategic problem of securing the northern and western frontiers of British India from the great powers and from Afghanistan, the British were extremely successful.

Thesis

The aim of this paper is argue that (from about 1901 to 1939) the British were successful strategically on the North-West Frontier of India because of: good analysis of the problem within a strategic context of ends and means; the deep knowledge of its civil and military officers on the region and its languages; workable civil-military co-operation and sound administrative structures; and the intelligent application of non-military and military power and influence, including the application of periods of

⁸ Tripodi, *Edge of Empire*, Conclusion Chapter, 401.

intense military violence. In line with the title, the paper will also describe the tribal disputes on the frontier, incessant or otherwise, from the 1890s to 1939.

The frame of reference for this paper is British national interests at that time, and British perspective with the tribes, rather than inter-tribal (or intra-tribal) disputes, although other aspects will be mentioned. The focus is on the British and the Pushtun tribes (but also with a discussion on Chitral).

The thesis will be argued with two qualifications or reservations. The first is in the definition of “successful strategically”. As will become clear, the British found themselves in a unique frontier environment of some disorder, and “success” for them did not imply the establishment of peace, order, good government and economic infrastructure. Secondly, Waziristan – North and South - always remained a problem for the British, although it will be argued that the thesis statement still applied, but with some qualification in Waziristan.

The paper will not extend beyond 1939, and the outbreak of the Second World War. To a large extent, frontier affairs were “managed” satisfactorily during the war, but the wartime period raised a number of issues of Pakistan’s and India’s independence which are beyond the main rationale of this paper.

Methodology

The methodology of the paper is historical. The paper will analyze different sources (and authors who have written) on the period from the early 1890s to 1939, analyze the Curzon reforms in frontier administration of 1901-02, and support the thesis using historical examples. The broad conclusions of the study – political, strategic, civil and military – will be summarized in the concluding chapter.

Disclaimer

The paper is an analysis of colonial strategy and civil and military power in a particular historical period, from 1893 to 1939. The paper is not framed as a social or humanitarian analysis. The author acknowledges that the impact of British military

campaigns on the frontier was destructive, in deaths and injuries caused, and in destruction to property. Nonetheless, this paper is presented as an analysis of military history and strategy within the context of that time, when different rules of war and rules governing military operations applied.

Analyzing the Environment and the Threat: Prelude to the 1901 Reforms

British administration went through various phases. The Punjab had been finally annexed from the Sikhs in 1849. From the end of the First Anglo-Afghan War (1842) to the Great Mutiny (1857) and on to 1877, the British essentially operated on a “close-border system” where they applied regular law and control to the settled districts of the Punjab (post 1849), but did not attempt to influence the Pushtun hill tribes on a permanent basis.⁹ The result was frequent raiding from the hills onto the plains, and frequent British punitive expeditions to retaliate: eleven military expeditions (1857-1877); and a further twelve expeditions in the years from 1877 to 1881.¹⁰

On the frontier, the British had applied different regulations (since the 1840s) from the law in the settled districts. Between 1871 and 1876 these rules – the Frontier Crimes Regulations – were formalized, and were again amended in 1887 and 1901.

The end of the Second Anglo-Afghan War (1878-81), the installation of an Amir of Afghanistan who could control his territory and with whom the British could deal, and the exclusion of Russian influence from Afghanistan, allowed room for a more forward policy in the mountains. However, it had both “forward” and “close-border” elements, and it might best be termed the confused policy from 1877 to 1898. By the 1870s on the western frontier, Robert Sandeman in Balochistan was pioneering methods of British influence and rule through indirect means and through local rulers and tribal chiefs.

⁹ In Britain in 1874, a Conservative government was elected under Benjamin Disraeli. This administration was more “forward” in its India border policy.

¹⁰ Caroe, *The Pathans*, 348.

The Sandeman system consisted of four main premises. The first was for British officers to know the tribes thoroughly and to make friends with them. The second premise was to work through tribal leaders (and support them) and to follow tribal custom if at all possible. The third was to get the tribe involved in service to the Government of India or the province, for example in a tribal levy or militia, and to pay the tribesmen for this service, thus binding them to the administration. The fourth and final premise was that peaceful methods should always be employed, but if force was needed, then overwhelming force must be applied.¹¹

Sandeman's policy was extremely successful in Balochistan, in large part because Baloch society was more hierarchical and structured than that of the north-west. In the late 1880s, the Viceroy agreed that Sandeman's ideas could be followed in South Waziristan. The concept was to allow the British to open-up the Gomal Pass, for where Sandeman had been operating on the Zhob River, the Zhob was a tributary of the Gomal River and the Gomal Pass had been much used by Ghalji caravans migrating between what is now Afghanistan into what is now Pakistan. The Zhob/Gomal River also provided "an upland corridor" to connect the Gomal Pass, Balochistan, and to Dera Ismail Khan and the Indus, and hence it might be a line-of-communication which could supplement the main rear line-of-communication through Multan.¹² Sir Olaf Caroe wrote in 1958:

In 1889, Lansdowne, then Viceroy, was converted and action followed promptly. Allowances were sanctioned for the Gumal [now Gomal] tribes, including those in Waziristan, and in January 1890 a great joint jirga of all the tribes was held by Sandeman at Apozai [Fort Sandeman, near the Zhob River] at which Bruce was also present. The tribes were eager to finger the money and everything went beautifully. For one moment it looked as if Sandeman's successes might be repeated further north. But it was not to be. The tribes of Waziristan were not the tribes of Quetta; they were much too hard a nut to crack. That story must wait for another chapter, but let it be said here that the Gumal never has been opened. It is still closed today.¹³

Importantly, some British political officers "on the ground" (albeit twenty years later), did understand that the Mahsud were different – particularly with the position of malik – compared to tribes in other areas where the Sandeman system had been

¹¹ Tripodi, *Edge of Empire*, Chapter 2, 107.

¹² Caroe, *The Pathans*, 375-376.

¹³ Caroe, *The Pathans*, 376. [The square brackets were inserted by author of this paper.]

effective. The Resident in Waziristan in 1910, F. W. Johnston, noted to his superiors that:

... there were certain authority figures within the tribe that could be termed maliks, for the democratic nature of the Mahsud did not preclude the emergence of individuals possessing wealth, charisma or personal influence. There were also undoubtedly the rank and file who were certainly not maliks. But between the two lay a body of men with huge influence; the leaders of the individual fortified villages or *kots*, among which the various sections of the Mahsud were scattered. ... These men, observed Johnston, comprised the true power base of the Mahsud and not a single individual, from the most powerful to the most menial, could be handed up without their say so.¹⁴

After the settling of the Durand Line, there were troubles within the newly formalized area, in the south in Waziristan and in the north in Chitral.

In the south in Waziristan, after 1893 the British sent Durand Line survey parties into the area and Richard Bruce attempted to introduce the Sandeman system. The tribes harassed the survey parties. There were murders in the Gomal Pass, and Bruce secured the surrender of the culprits to a jirga and they were imprisoned. However the maliks involved were killed or forced to flee by the Mahsuds, led by Jagger (an Abdurrahman Khel Bahlolzai) and Mullah Powinda (a Shabi Khel Mahsud) as counsellor. The Punjab government's intention to send a punitive expedition was over-ruled by the Government of India. One commentator has concluded that this lack of resolve (or retribution) by the British "marked them" in the eyes of the Mahsud, and essentially meant the end of a workable "malik system" in Waziristan. Mullah Powinda was a charismatic leader, a Pushtun nationalist, one of many charismatic figures who would have an important influence on the frontier during the next fifty years of British quasi-administration. He had the support of a number of influential mullahs in the Tochi area of North Waziristan.¹⁵

Inconsistently, the government decided to establish a permanent camp at Wana (South Waziristan), outside of Mahsud territory. Wana is some 4,000 feet above sea level. In November 1894 Jagger led a furious night attack on Wana camp. In retaliation, General Lockhart led a campaign in 1894-95 which traversed Mahsud territory from

¹⁴ Tripodi, *Edge of Empire*, Chapter 3, 132-133 (citing a Letter, F.W. Johnston to the Secretary to the Chief Commissioner NWFP, 5 September 1910).

¹⁵ Tripodi, *Edge of Empire*, Chapter 3, 139.

end to end, but there were no conclusive agreements exacted from the Mahsuds, nor a real attempt to occupy the Mahsud territory permanently.¹⁶ The British did establish some small posts in the Tochi Valley in (present-day) North Waziristan.

In the 1890s the Waziristan area was remote, mountainous and inaccessible. The tribes in the area included the Bhitannis, the Waziris and the Mahsuds. Surveying the century from 1847 to 1947, Caroe commented that “of all the Pathan tribes up and down the North-West Frontier, the Mahsuds were without question the most intransigent.”¹⁷ In a mountainous region, the Mahsuds inhabited a central block of mountains – Caroe referred to it as “a Keep” – some 11,500 feet in height. The Mahsuds were in constant aggressive warfare and encroachment against “their cousins” the Wazirs. Caroe commented on the events of 1894-95, stating that “Indirect rule does not work in the absence of support, and if necessary protection, which must be afforded to the tribal authority expected to obtain the results desired by government. The fact that there should be maliks was not enough.”¹⁸ One British officer described the Mahsuds as having “a well-established reputation for treachery”, and even a Mahsud might say (with a grin) “we are a very untrustworthy people.”¹⁹ From the Mahsud point-of-view, Caroe concluded that the “Mahsud effort was inspired by a deep-seated instinct which drove the tribe at all costs to resist subjection and to preserve their own peculiar way of life”,²⁰ and quoting Mizh:

Therefore let us keep our independence, and have none of your law and order and other institutions, but stick to our customs and be men like our fathers before us.²¹

In order to understand the reforms of 1901-02, it is necessary to understand the militancy and disturbances of the 1890s, and some of the major military campaigns conducted by the British in 1895 and 1897-98.

¹⁶ Caroe, *The Pathans*, 398-400.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 397.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 399, 392.

¹⁹ Charles Chenevix Trench, *The Frontier Scouts* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1985), 14, 16.

²⁰ Caroe, *The Pathans*, 397.

²¹ Mizh, Preface, quoted in Caroe, *The Pathans*, 396.

Chitral 1895

In the north of the frontier, Chitral was a princely state where the British had attached an Agent since 1889. Chitral was non-Pathan territory. After the death of the ruling Prince, a fight developed over the succession. A British-commanded force of about 400 soldiers was sent (under Surgeon-Major Robertson) to observe and report, but it was surrounded and besieged in the Chitral fort. Chitral was important to the British because it lay astride the shortest route from Russian (Tajikistan) territory (across the Wakhan corridor) into British India.

The Chitral garrison held out, and two relief columns were dispatched. From the south, a divisional-sized relief force (15,000 troops of three brigades) was formed at Mardan under Major-General Low, intending to force a route (some 160 miles) from the south over the Malakand Pass and the Swat River. The division fought and captured the Malakand Pass from the south, later crossed the Swat River (Chakdara), and proceeded via Mundah and then over the Janbatai Pass (not the Panjkora valley route) to Dir, and finally over the Lowarai Pass (10,000 feet) to Chitral. Prior to this, the British had known very little of this southern approach to Chitral.²² Some ten years later, the then Lieutenant Wavell (later Viceroy and a Field Marshal) marched, as part of his battalion, from Nowshera to Chitral. He later recalled the extraordinary terrain of the Lowarai Pass, and then the 25-mile march from Kila Drosh to Chitral over a narrow path, with a rock wall on one side and a sheer drop into the river on the other.²³

Meanwhile, a smaller relief force under Colonel Kelly from Gilgit (about 1,000 troops) had approached Chitral from the east, conducting an extraordinary 28-day forced march over some 207 miles through snow-covered mountains. This included crossing the Shandur Pass (12,000 feet) and fighting battles at Chokalwat and Nisa Gol. They reached Chitral ahead of Low's division and relieved the garrison on 20 April 1895. One of the defenders of Chitral was Captain Charles Townsend, who as

²² Caroe, *The Pathans*, 383-386. Other accounts stated that the force took the Janbatai Pass route.

²³ Victoria Schofield, *Wavell: Soldier and Statesman* (London: John Murray/Hodder Headline (Paperback), 2006), 27.

a general in 1916 attempted to apply similar “lessons learned” in Mesopotamia, and was spectacularly defeated at the siege of Kut.

The (1895) Chitral expedition was the first use of the automatic Maxim gun, which fired 600 rounds per minute, and it was employed by the British regiment, the 1st Battalion, King’s Royal Rifle Corps (later the Royal Green Jackets).²⁴ The Maxims had first been used by the British in 1893. The impact of the Maxim gun in the Matabele War (the northern Transvaal of South Africa, 1893-94) upon offensive charges by Matabele tribesmen had been devastating. The fire of the Maxim guns was extremely effective (militarily) in the Chitral campaign, and gave the British forces an immense technological advantage.²⁵

One of the political consequences of these operations was the establishment of agreements with the ruler of Dir. The British appointed an Agent (Harold Deane) and created the Agency of Dir, Swat and Chitral (sometimes called the Malakand Agency).²⁶

These events were just a prelude to the great Pushtun uprising of 1897-98, which had three main foci: Waziristan; Swat; and the (present-day) Mohmand, Khyber, Kurram and Orakzai Agencies. It began in Waziristan in June 1897 with an attack on a British frontier officer and his Indian Army escort. However, still smarting from the British punitive operations in Waziristan (1894-95), the Mahsud tribe did not join the wider Pushtun uprising.²⁷

²⁴ “King’s Royal Rifle Corps – Maxim Gun Section”, www.britishempire.co.uk/forces/armyunits/britishinfantry/krrc (accessed 15 January 2012).

²⁵ “The Machine Gun Volume 1 – Part III – Chapter 1 – Maxim Machine Guns”, 13-15, (transcribed and formatted by Larry Jewell and Patrick Clancey) www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USN/ref/MG/I/MG-3.html (accessed 15 January 2012).

²⁶ Caroe, *The Pathans*, 386.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 388.



4 - British troops on parade (date unknown) at the Royal Artillery Barracks, Rawalpindi. From 1895 Rawalpindi was the location of Headquarters, Northern Command, of the British Indian Army.

(Courtesy www.pakistanpaedia.com/oth/rawalpindi/pic_rawalpindi-roy)



5 - Major-General Sir Bindon Blood, an Engineer officer and a British commander during the Pushtun Revolt of 1897-98, who commanded the Malakand Field Force, and then operations against the Mohmands. He also served in the 1895 Chitral campaign.

(Courtesy www.npgprints.com/lowres/38/main/87/441490.jpg)

The 1897- 98 Rebellion

The conflict shifted in July 1897 to the Swat Valley, where the conflict really began when the British-fortified posts at Chakdara and Malakand were fiercely attacked. 5,000 tribesmen (some say 8,000) were led in these attacks by Saidullah, the so-called “Mad Fakir of Swat”.²⁸ Winston Churchill, an Army officer and journalist involved in the events of 1897 wrote of the British polo match (with Pushtun spectators) just before the attack on the Malakand garrison (26 July):

They knew, these Pathans, what was coming. A wave of fanaticism was sweeping down the valley. It would carry them away. They were powerless to resist. Like one who feels a fit coming on, they waited. Nor did they care very much. When the Mad Fakir arrived, they would fight and kill the infidels. In the meantime there was no necessity to deprive them of their ponies. And so with motives, partly callous, partly sportsmanlike, and not without some faint suspicion of chivalry, they warned the native grooms, and these taking the hint reached the camp in safety.²⁹

Overall the British probably faced some 200,000 Pushtun fighters in the 1897-98 revolt, and themselves employed over 59,000 regular troops.³⁰ The causes of the revolt, when the tribes uncharacteristically unified, have been generally attributed to: the fixing of the Durand Line; the increasing British encroachment onto tribal lands (even if not deliberate, and the British did pay for their supplies and access); the building of the Malakand road (Peshawar to Malakand to Chitral); the emergence of powerful Pushtun religious and nationalist leaders; and the emergence of a boy said to be last descendant of the Mughal line of emperors.³¹ Some Pakistani scholars have suggested that one of the causes of the 1897-98 revolt was (in part) pan-Islamism, and the influence of the Ottoman Empire and the Caliphate. Dr Abdul Rauf offers the

²⁸ “Mad Mullahs and Englishmen”, 7, in David B. Edwards, *Heroes of the Age* (UC E-Books Collection 1982-2004), <http://publishing.cdlib.org/ucpressbooks/view?docId+ft458006b> (accessed 6 December 2011).

²⁹ Winston Churchill, *The Story of the Malakand Field Force: An Episode of Frontier War*, (Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk: Leo Cooper and Octopus, 1989) (first published by Longmans Green & Co., 1898), 29-30.

³⁰ Rob Johnson, “The 1897 Revolt and Tirah Valley Operations from the Pashtun Perspective”, *Tribal Analysis Center* (Williamsburg, Virginia: Tribal Analysis Center, 2009), www.tribalanalysiscenter.com/.../ (accessed 6 December 2011), (page displaying Footnotes 1-4. The article is not paginated). Frederick Barth was an anthropologist writing in the 1950s.

³¹ Caroe, *The Pathans*, 387. David Loyn, *Butcher and Bolt* (London: Hutchinson, 2008), 153.

more general conclusion that, at least until 1918, the encounters against the British on the frontier were “predominantly” led by religious holy men – the mullahs.³²

In August 1897 the Mohmands and Afridis began offensives towards Kohat and Peshawar. The Mohmands attacked the village of Shabqadar, about 15 miles from Peshawar. In Kohat District, the Orakzais besieged the British-fortified posts on Samana Ridge, which had been in British hands since the 1888/91 expeditions and controlled access to the pass of Chagru Kotal. Subsequently and most importantly, the Afridis captured all the British posts in the Khyber Pass. There were extensive uprisings in the Tirah, a region of five valleys (some 700 square miles) traversing the (present-day) Kurram and Khyber Agencies, and around the Bara River.

The British military reaction was comprehensive but sequential. The British were probably unable to muster enough combat power for simultaneous action. They first sent a force against the Waziristan (Tochi River) incident, and this had the effect of placing a screen between Waziristan and the uprisings in the Tirah.³³ The next British advances, in sequence, were against Malakand, against the Mohmands, and then into the Tirah. While small forces were initially sent to relieve the Malakand garrison, the British decided to form (at Nowshera) a two-brigade force, the Malakand Field Force, and Major-General Sir Bindon Blood took command on 31 July. A keen polo player “till warned by the march of time”, Blood had been commissioned into the Royal Engineers in 1860 and had fought in various colonial wars over 25 years, including in the Chitral expedition two years earlier. The Malakand Field Force had 6,800 infantry, 700 cavalymen and 24 artillery guns.³⁴

Malakand was relieved by the smaller force on 31 July 1897, and General Blood’s force arrived the following day. Letters from the Malakand garrison attested to the ferocity of the fighting; there were fierce nightly attacks (by thousands of tribesmen)

³² Dr. Abdul Rauf, “Pan-Islamism and the North West Frontier Province of British India (1897 – 1918)”, *Perceptions* (Winter 2007): 25-27, [www.sam.gov.tr/.../winter-002-PERCEPTION\(abdulrauf\)\(2\).pdf](http://www.sam.gov.tr/.../winter-002-PERCEPTION(abdulrauf)(2).pdf)

³³ Caroe, *The Pathans*, 388.

³⁴ Churchill, *The Story of the Malakand Field Force*, 53-55. Sir Bindon Blood was born in 1842 and lived to the age of 97 years. He later fought in the South African War (1901-02) and was Colonel-Commandant of the Royal Engineers during the 1914-18 War. He took up his final military appointment as Chief Royal Engineer at the age of 94 in 1936. He died in 1940.

on the garrison, which included British women and children.³⁵ Next, General Blood approved the relief column to save the garrison at Chakdara, which was relieved on 2 August. Subsequently, a third brigade was added to Blood's Force, and from Chakdara (where the valley bifurcates) he advanced up the eastern valley and captured the Landakai Spur in mid-August, the so-called "Gate of Swat" which controls access to the Upper Swat Valley.

By September, in response to the general uprising, the Government of India had decided to apply military force into the Banjaur area and into what would later be known as the Mohmand Agency. Consequently two forces were formed: the Malakand Field Force of three brigades (under Blood); and the Mohmand Field Force of two brigades (under Major-General Edmond Elles). The Malakand Force would advance from Chakdara up the northward branch of the valley to Uch and then west across the Panjkora River and into the great valley of Nawagai. The Mohmand Force would commence from Shabqadr, enter the mountains and march north-east, to join-up with Blood's Force, which eventually occurred in late September at Lakarai.³⁶ There were a number of battles, including British reverses in the Mohmand valley and an attack on Blood at Nawagai by 4,000 men under Hadda Mullah. General Elles' force subsequently conducted operations in the Jarobi and Khel valleys against the Upper Mohmands. The British (under Blood and Brigadier-General Jeffreys) conducted punitive operations, such as destroying villages, in the Mohmand valley and around Inayat Killa. The Mohmands "submitted" and agreed to the British terms in early October 1897.

The Tirah campaign followed the Malakand and Mohmand campaigns, and was launched from Kohat in October 1897. It was commanded by General Sir William Lockhart with 35,000 men, organized into two divisions. Lockhart was later Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army until his death in 1900. The British advanced on a single front, and faced strong opposition in October at the Dargai Heights (199 casualties), at the Sampagha Pass (leading to the Mastura valley), and at Arhanga Pass (from the Mastura to the Tirah valleys). In November British brigades

³⁵ Letter, Colonel Meiklejohn (commanding the garrison) to his wife, July 1897, cited in Alastair Lawson, "Rare British India Documents Surface" (3 January 2007) (BBC), www.news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/6176805.stm (accessed 8 December 2011).

³⁶ Churchill, *The Story of the Malakand Field Force*, 73, 91-93.

traversed the main valley destroying villages, and also dispatched brigades into the Waran and Rajgul valleys. The Afridis conducted skilful guerilla warfare. The British also dispatched a brigade to fight the Chamkannis, the Mamuzais and the Massozais. This brigade linked-up with a separate mobile column operating in Kurram.

For his withdrawal, General Lockhart sent one division down the Mastura valley to destroy tribal forts and proceed to Bara, and then to Peshawar. It was unopposed. Lockhart and his other division moved along the Bara valley in December 1897 in “severe” cold weather, part of the march being interrupted by four days of intense fighting, until they met the other division. Field Marshal Birdwood, who served in the Bara Valley as a staff officer, was full of admiration for the skirmishing skills of the Afridi and “the rapidity of their movements ... they just scatter and disappear, their astounding agility apparently quite unaffected by the steepness of the hillsides.” Birdwood described frontier warfare as “picquets, perimeters and patrols”.³⁷

Subsequently the British re-possessed the Khyber forts, and forced the Afridis to pay fines and surrender a specified number of weapons. Lockhart’s Tirah Force was broken-up in April 1898. It is important not to underestimate the role of inspirational religious figures in the Pushtun campaign, nor the unusual degree of unanimity of the tribes.

Pushtun Perceptions. There is little written evidence of Pushtun perceptions of the events of 1897-98. Going back to Frederick Barth, Western academics have studied and attempted to understand Pushtun society and mores. (What follows is a summary of Western academic views, not necessarily correct.) There were about 350 tribes and each of the tribes has a large number of clans or *khels* from it. The main languages were Pashto and Pahlto, although there were many regional dialects. Pushtuns were surrounded by a number of intense cultural loyalties – “concentric rings” – including family, extended family, clan, tribe, confederacy and language group. *Pushtunwali* was (and is) the tribal code, and has many concepts and precepts, including *melmastia* (hospitality to strangers), *nanawatai* (hospitality to fugitives), the preservation of

³⁷ Field-Marshal Lord Birdwood, *Khaki and Gown: An Autobiography* (London and Melbourne: Ward, Lock & Co., 1941), 83, 87.

personal honour (*nang*), and *badal* (revenge against all enemies). Whilst there was disagreement on this, a number of authors have stressed the martial tradition and the Pushtun “predilection for embracing jihad”. Barth summarized that a form of anarchy existed within Pushtun society, whereas Akbar Ahmed concluded that religion and tribal cohesion could overcome those conditions.³⁸

Johnson argued that the key factor in the 1897-98 revolt was land and honour. Whilst the British had only occupied the settled districts, their fortifications and roads along the edge of tribal lands, as well as the introduction of some political agents into tribal areas, meant that it was only a matter of time until the tribal areas came under threat. The occupation of Pushtun lands would constitute a direct threat to their way of life, and they believed that the British had “deliberately and consistently eroded their honour”.³⁹ Taking the longer view and summarizing, Akbar Ahmad has argued that colonization (however indirect) and the British influence:

... has meant destroyed villages, water-tanks and grain stores and a never ending series of ‘butcher and bolt’ raids: an almost total failure in communication between two systems. Colonization scars the colonized as it dehumanizes the colonizer.⁴⁰

There is still debate about the causes of the 1897-98 revolt. Some tribesmen, when negotiating with the British, blamed the mullahs, a view supported by an experienced political, Sir Robert Warburton, who served for 18 years in the Khyber Agency. Other politicals, such as Robert Bruce, disagreed and thought local grievances were far more important. Johnson concluded that the most important factor was British advances towards tribal territory, and “the impassioned reaction” to the changes and to the threat to “their traditional way of life”.

The British had won the campaigns of 1897-98, but at some human cost and great financial cost. A different solution to the frontier problem had to be explored and implemented.

³⁸ Johnson, “The 1897 Revolt and Tirah Valley Operations from the Pashtun Perspective”, (page displaying footnotes 12-15).

³⁹ Ibid., (page displaying footnotes 20-21).

⁴⁰ Akbar S. Ahmad, “An Aspect of the Colonial Encounter in the Frontier” (no date), 1 www.khyber.org/publications/016-020/colonialencounter.shtml (accessed 23 October 2011).

Chapter 2

Curzon and his new frontier policy

George Nathaniel Curzon (Lord Curzon) assumed office as Viceroy of India (and Governor-General) in January 1899, at the young age of 39 years. The son of Lord Scarsdale, Curzon was educated at Eton and at Balliol College, Oxford. In 1885 he was assistant private secretary to the British Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, and entered Parliament in 1886, aged 27. In his thirties, Curzon had travelled widely in the region, including to Russia, Central Asia, Afghanistan and to the source of the River Oxus in the Pamir Mountains. In the 1890s, in Parliament as a Conservative, Curzon had been a junior minister in the India Office and at the Foreign Office.

Curzon was later to be Britain's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs from 1919 to 1924. He was a brilliant scholar, an energetic and industrious administrator, and extremely arrogant. He married twice, and his (American) second wife, Lady (Grace) Curzon succeeded in having an affair with her step-son-in-law.⁴¹ His wife's fortune, however, enabled Curzon to preserve and restore historic houses. The preservation of the historic monuments of Pakistan and India owes much to Curzon's foresight and legislation.

Curzon was very conscious of Russian expansionism, and the need to secure British India against foreign encroachment. He was also conscious of the strategic problem of ends and means, and the confused frontier policy of the 1890s (and the associated military garrisons in the north-west, and frontier expeditions) was costing the British a

⁴¹ The focus of Lady Curzon's attentions was her step-son-in-law (married to one of Lord Curzon's daughters, Cynthia), Sir Oswald Mosley, who was a Conservative Member of Parliament and years later, the leader of the British fascists. Sir Oswald was concurrently having an affair with another of Lord Curzon's daughters (Cynthia's sister), Lady Alexandra Metcalfe.



- 6 - Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India from 1899 to 1905. Curzon shaped the British strategic approach for the security of British India from foreign incursions (from Russia or Afghanistan) and the Government of India's relations with the Pushtun tribes of the North-West Frontier.

(Courtesy www.indianetzone.com/photos_gallery/13/Lord-Curzon_1179.jpg)



7 - Grace, Marchioness Curzon of Kedleston. Lord Curzon was fascinated by antiquities and historic buildings and initiated protective legislation for the Indian sub-continent. Curzon's later preservation work in England was largely funded by his American (heiress) wife, Grace Curzon. Her portrait was painted in 1925 by John Singer Sargent, and the original resides in the Currier Museum of Art, Manchester, New Hampshire.

(Courtesy <http://huntsvillehistorycollection.org/hhpics/people/people1/lady>)



8 - Sir Harold Deane, Chief Commissioner of the new North-West Frontier Province from 1901 to 1908.

(Courtesy http://my.wn.com/media/wiki/h/a/Harold_Arthur_Deane.jpg)

small fortune. Finance was a major factor, but so too was effectiveness and influencing the frontier tribes into quiescence. They were so independent, that subduing the frontier was not considered feasible. There was the political border – the Durand Line – but behind that was the administrative border of British India – essentially the settled districts along the Indus River, which were the principal concern of British administration. Could the British tolerate a somewhat lawless area between “the two borders”, deter foreign aggression, and keep the settled districts free of tribal raids?

The policy and practice of Lord Elgin (Viceroy of India 1894-99) had been to establish fortifications and military garrisons forward of the administrative border. Apart from the cost, Elgin's successor, Lord Curzon, thought this practice was provocative towards the Amir of Afghanistan, as well as being wasteful and expensive for Government finance. Forward Army garrisons also acted as "a catalyst for violence and defiance" of the British. For many years the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, based at Government House Lahore, had administered the frontier as part of the Punjab. In light of the major rebellion of 1897-98 and other troubles, Curzon was also concerned whether this was the best system of administration.⁴²

Curzon did his research, and in his first year (1899) interviewed civil and military officers on the North-West Frontier. The majority wanted the frontier administered as a separate province, excised from the Punjab, and according to Curzon the existing system was "like handing over the custody of the National Gallery – on the score of propinquity – to the householders of Trafalgar Square." According to Curzon, in fifty years of control from Lahore, there had been forty military expeditions into the frontier area.⁴³

Curzon's strategy had four major "ends": firstly, to manage the frontier in a way which ensured the security of British India, including against foreign great power threats; secondly to manage the frontier in a way which did not unduly antagonize the Amir of Afghanistan; thirdly, to manage the frontier in a way which met some of the aspirations of the frontier tribes for quasi-independence, and yet minimized the frequency of tribal incursions against Punjabis in the settled districts; and fourthly to manage the frontier in a way which reduced British military expeditions or garrisons, and reduced the financial cost. In terms of the strategic analysis, the problem was viewed from the Viceroy of India's capital, and not as a local Punjabi problem.

Curzon's solution adopted novel "means" to meet these strategic ends. The means included firstly to administer frontier affairs separately from the settled districts, and

⁴² David Dilks, *Curzon in India: (Volume One) Achievement* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1969), 225-226. Johnson, "The 1897 Revolt and Tirah Valley Operations from the Pashtun Perspective", (Pages displaying Footnotes 34-40 and 41-43).

⁴³ Dilks, *Curzon in India: (Volume One) Achievement*, 227.

have the north-west frontier directly under the purview of the Viceroy's own Department, the Foreign and Political Department of the Government of India. Secondly to excise the frontier from the existing Punjab Province, and to create a new North-West Frontier Province under a Chief Commissioner reporting directly to the Foreign and Political Department. Thirdly, to recruit and retain an elite of political officers, expert in the languages and customs of the frontier tribes, working for the Chief Commissioner. Fourthly, to implement widely the Sandeman system, including local tribal autonomy and justice (including the enhanced Frontier Crimes Regulations, 1901), and a system of rewards (payment) and punishment for the tribes. And fifthly, to withdraw regular Army troops out of the tribal areas (but keep them in reserve) and to enlist selected tribesmen into local levies and militias officered by British and Indian Army officers on secondment.

Curzon did not have an easy time implementing his reforms. The Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab resisted strongly, and Curzon commented on Punjab's administration of frontier affairs:

I venture to affirm that there is not another country in the world which adopts a system so irrational in theory, so bizarre in practice, as to interpose between its foreign minister and its most important sphere of activity the barrier, not of a subordinate official, but of a subordinate government, on the mere geographical plea that the latter resides in closer proximity to the scene of action – a plea which itself breaks down when it is remembered that for five months of the year the supreme and local governments are both located in the same spot, Simla.⁴⁴

The new province of North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) was created in November 1901 and legally implemented in April 1902. Curzon stated its aims:

It [NWFP] will enable the Viceroy to conduct the most important business of the Department of which he is the personal chief. It will free the management of frontier politics from the delays that are inseparable from a chain of reference whose strength is sacrificed to its length. It will promote greater rapidity, and consequently greater freedom of action. Its tendency should be not towards aggression but towards peace; since war with the tribes is generally the result of ignorance or indecision at earlier stages. It will entrust tribal management exclusively to those who know the tribes. It should train

⁴⁴ Curzon's Minute of 13 September, 1901, quoted in Caroe, *The Pathans*, 415-416.

up a school of officers worthy of the most critical but splendid duty that is imposed upon any of the officers of the Queen's Government in India.⁴⁵

The initial districts of NWFP were Peshawar, Kohat, Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan and Hazara. Added to these districts in this early period were the Malakand territories, consisting of the three princely states of Dir, Swat and Chitral, and four 'tribal agencies': Khyber; Kurram; North Waziristan; and South Waziristan.⁴⁶ (The Mohmand and Banjaur agencies were later creations.) Thus the British province of NWFP was an amalgam of the areas covered by the present-day KPK and FATA.

In terms of finance, Curzon's reforms were very effective. During his tenure (1899–1905), he did not have to authorize a major military expedition into the tribal areas. The number of regular forces stationed beyond the administrative border fell from 10,200 (pre-Curzon) to 5,000 soldiers (Curzon's time and after). Importantly, the costs fell. Military movements in North-West Frontier cost £4,584,000 (1894-98) and fell to £248,000 (for 1899-1905). The new NWFP consisted of 38,000 square miles, only 13,000 of which lay within the administrative border. In that area alone, there was a reduction in violent crime, progress with public works, revenue and irrigation, and a greater degree of peace than ever before.⁴⁷

Whilst the Curzon policy was generally successful in achieving British aims, it will be noted and argued that the circumstances of the 1919 Anglo-Afghan War and the specific difficulties of North and South Waziristan, meant that the policy had to be modified from 1919 to 1939 with enhanced Army presence in Waziristan.

The following chapter (Chapter 3) covers a synopsis of the major military campaigns from 1901 to 1939 – "hard power". The fourth chapter ("not quite soft power") discusses the political officers and the major "means" of the Curzon system, which were:

⁴⁵ Lord Curzon, circa January 1901, quoted in H. Cardwell Lipsett, *Lord Curzon in India: 1898-1903* (London: R.A. Everett & Co., 1903), 51, [DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska – Lincoln] digitalcommons.unl.edu/afghanenglish/260 (accessed 2011).

⁴⁶ The British had operated formally in the Waziristan area since 1893. After the 1894-95 disturbances, a political agent was appointed to Wana (South Waziristan), and later to the Tochi area (North Waziristan, based in Miranshah). A Resident in Waziristan was appointed in 1908. The British did not formally establish the North Waziristan Agency until 1910.

⁴⁷ Dilkes, *Curzon in India: (Volume One) Achievement*, 229-230.

- The administration of frontier affairs in a separate NWFP, and the elite of frontier officers (“selecting the right men”) knowledgeable in the languages and customs of the frontier;
- The Sandeman system of tribal autonomy, the Frontier Crimes Regulations, and the consequent lack of British permanent infrastructure and investment; and
- The withdrawal of the regular army, but the efficacy of Army (and Air Force) tactics and weapons if intelligently implemented, and overall civil-military co-operation.

The concluding chapter (Chapter 5) will then follow.

Chapter 3

Hard Power:

Synopsis of the Major Military Campaigns on the Frontier (1901 – 1939)

The years from 1901 to 1939 can broadly be divided into two periods, before the 1919 Afghan War, and after it. From 1901 to 1919, the Curzon system functioned as intended, with limited Army involvement in the tribal areas.⁴⁸ However, during the 1914-18 World War, huge numbers of British Indian Army units⁴⁹ and formations were sent overseas, including to France, Palestine and Mesopotamia. The Indian garrison was severely diminished. Many of the units stationed near the frontier, and sent on operations there, were British Territorial Army (reserve) units untrained in mountain warfare and unfamiliar with dealing with the tribes of the frontier.⁵⁰

During this period, the headquarters of the British Indian Army was in Calcutta until the British capital moved to New Delhi in 1911-12. The Frontier was encompassed in the Army's Northern Command, set up in 1895, and with its Command headquarters in Rawalpindi.

On the frontier, the British had made the system of tribal levies (and the lack of permanent regular army garrisons) work as a policy until 1919. But the May 1919 Afghan War and subsequent problems in 1919/the early 1920s forced them to modify the Curzon system in Waziristan.

The immediate cause of the 1919 war was the killing of the pro-British Amir of Afghanistan in February 1919, and the nature of his successor. Generally 1919 was a year of "imperial overstretch" for the British and Indian Armies, simultaneously while the wartime conscript Army was being demobilized. The British required large

⁴⁸ Caroe commented that Curzon was right in his analysis, and that from 1901 to 1914 there were only minor British military actions in NWFP, and that "the province stood firm throughout the trials of World War I", despite the influence of Britain's wartime adversary, Turkey. (Caroe, *The Pathans*, 418.)

⁴⁹ British Army units stationed in India together with the Indian Army, were together termed technically "the Army in India". For simplicity, the term "British Indian Army" had been used in this paper to refer to British and Indian Army units collaboratively serving in India.

⁵⁰ Tim Moreman, "Army in India and Frontier Warfare 1914 – 1939", www.khyber.org/publications/041-045/armyinindia.shtml (accessed 3 September 2011), 3.

garrisons overseas in the aftermath of the war (to occupy Germany and Middle East areas), while they had to fight a war against the Bolsheviks in North Russia and a counter-insurgency in Ireland, and at the same time there was increased political pressure from the Indian Congress movement for Indian independence. The events of May 1919, when an Afghan army invaded and occupied an area of the Khyber Pass, had been preceded by serious riots in India and in the Punjab, and the Amritsar massacre in April 1919.

In early May, the Afghan occupation of a water spring near the frontier post of Bagh (near Landi Kotal) and the subsequent fighting, prompted the withdrawal of the Khyber Rifles. The Afridis and the Orakzais became convinced that it would be safe to attack the British, and the tribesmen of the Khyber Rifles deserted and many either joined the Pushtun revolt or the Afghan army. The Afghan army advanced on two routes: one along the Kurram River Valley and attacked Thal; and the other force (of 14 regular battalions) advanced into Waziristan through the Kaitu Pass and along the Tochi River Valley. Back in the northern area, the British concentrated their forces and defeated the Afghans and tribal forces at Bagh on 11 May. They sent an RAF bomber to bomb Kabul, and the Afghans sued for peace on 31 May 1919.⁵¹

However, the consequences of the 1919 war (and its aftermath) were more far-reaching, in that the loyalty of the British-officered tribal levies was questioned. In Waziristan, this led to the large scale introduction of regular garrisons into the two agencies, and road-building projects. The Curzon system (at least for Waziristan) had been modified.

We will now consider the incidents of the period from 1901 to 1939, but following the threads of the different agencies and tribal groupings: the Mohmands; the Afridis (Khyber area); and Waziristan.

The Mohmands

⁵¹ Mark Jacobsen, "British Retreat from Waziristan", www.khyber.org/publications/011-015/britishretreat/shtml (accessed 23 October 2011), 1, 6.

The British Indian Army fought campaigns against the Mohmand tribesmen in 1908, 1915, 1916-17, 1927, 1933 and 1935. One of the great figures in (1939-45) British strategy was General Hastings Ismay, who worked closely with Churchill and the Chiefs of Staff. Ismay fought against the Mohmands in 1908 as a young lieutenant in the 21st Cavalry (Daly's Horse), then based at Risalpur. As the expedition advanced, he described the Mohmands' tactics as being to occupy the high ground, shoot the British, and when dislodged to occupy the next piece of high ground and restart the battle. The Mohmands used the darkness hours for sniper fire at the British camps and horses. The British, with three brigades, had a list of target villages and their tactics were to occupy a village, destroy any towers or keeps (and often the village), confiscate any stored grain, and burn the Mohmands' crops. The campaign originated when the Mohmands had raided and burnt a village (outside their tribal area) near Risalpur, killed a policeman and carried off a number of Hindu women. Eventually, the Mohmands sued for peace.⁵²

In the Mohmand campaign of 1933, Brigadier Claude Auchinleck commanded the punitive column sent into Mohmand territory in a three-month campaign (July to October). Auchinleck was later commander-in-chief in the Middle East (1941-42), Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army (1943-47) as a Field Marshal, and the last survivor of the senior British WW2 commanders – he died at the age of 96 in 1981. In 1933, there were also operations in the neighbouring agency of Banjaour.

In 1935 the British were fighting in Mohmand Agency in the Nahaqi Pass (within the Khyber Pass). Captain Godfrey Meynell (aged 31) of the 5th Battalion (Guides), 12th Frontier Force Regiment, was the Adjutant. Most of the officers had been killed, and seeking information on his forward troops, Meynell went forward and discovered them being almost overrun by superior numbers. Taking command, and with two Lewis guns, he and his force inflicted major casualties on the advancing enemy and blunted the assault. In the ensuing hand-to-hand struggle, Meynell was killed on the position, still heroically protecting his men. He was awarded the Victoria Cross posthumously. According to Akbar Ahmad, the billiards room, at the North

⁵² Hastings Ismay, *The Memoirs of General the Lord Ismay*, KG, PC, GCB, CH, DSO (London: Heinemann, 1960), 12-14.

Waziristan Scouts Mess at Miramshah, is still dominated by the portrait of Captain Meynell, VC.⁵³

The 1935 Mohmand campaign (August to September) was notable for an improvement in the Army's tactics and integration of new vehicles. The Army had improved motor-transport, engineers and logistic support, and was able to establish a permanent line-of-communication along the Gandab Road. They were supported successfully by a company of light tanks and by the 18-Pounder artillery which (with its longer range) could support a number of widely-separated Army columns. Commanders and troops were able to conduct large night operations, which disrupted Mohmand plans and their ability to seize the initiative.⁵⁴

The Afridis

The British Indian Army fought the Afridi tribesmen, who populated the Khyber Agency, in 1908 (the Zakka Khel sub-tribe), 1919 and fought them again in 1930-31.

The Zakka Khel is a sub-tribe of the Afridis, based in the Bazar Valley. In 1907 there was persistent raiding by the Zakka Khel, including into Peshawar itself. In February 1908 the British decided to launch a punitive expedition against the Zakka Khel under Major-General Sir James Willcocks. It was limited strictly to a punitive task, rather than the annexation of tribal territory.⁵⁵ Field Marshal Lord Wavell was then a lieutenant in the Black Watch (he had earlier served in the Chitral garrison in 1906), and he was seconded to command the ammunition column in the Bazar Valley campaign. Because of its short duration, it was known as "Willcocks weekend war".⁵⁶ Wavell was later Viceroy of India from 1943 to 1947.

⁵³ Akbar S. Ahmad, "An Aspect of the Colonial Encounter in the Frontier", 2.

⁵⁴ Moreman, "Army in India and Frontier Warfare 1914 – 1939", www.khyber.org/publications/041-045/armyinindia.shtml, 9-10.

⁵⁵ "Field Operation – Zakka Khel, 1908. Bazar Valley Field Force. (1908)", www.maggs.com/departments/naval_and_military/ (accessed 11 February 2012).

⁵⁶ Schofield, *Wavell: Soldier and Statesman*, 28-29.



9 - Troops of the 2nd Battalion, 5th Royal Gurkha Rifles, on operations on the North-West Frontier in 1923.

(Courtesy <http://colonialwarfare18901975.devhub.com/img/upload/800px-5th>)



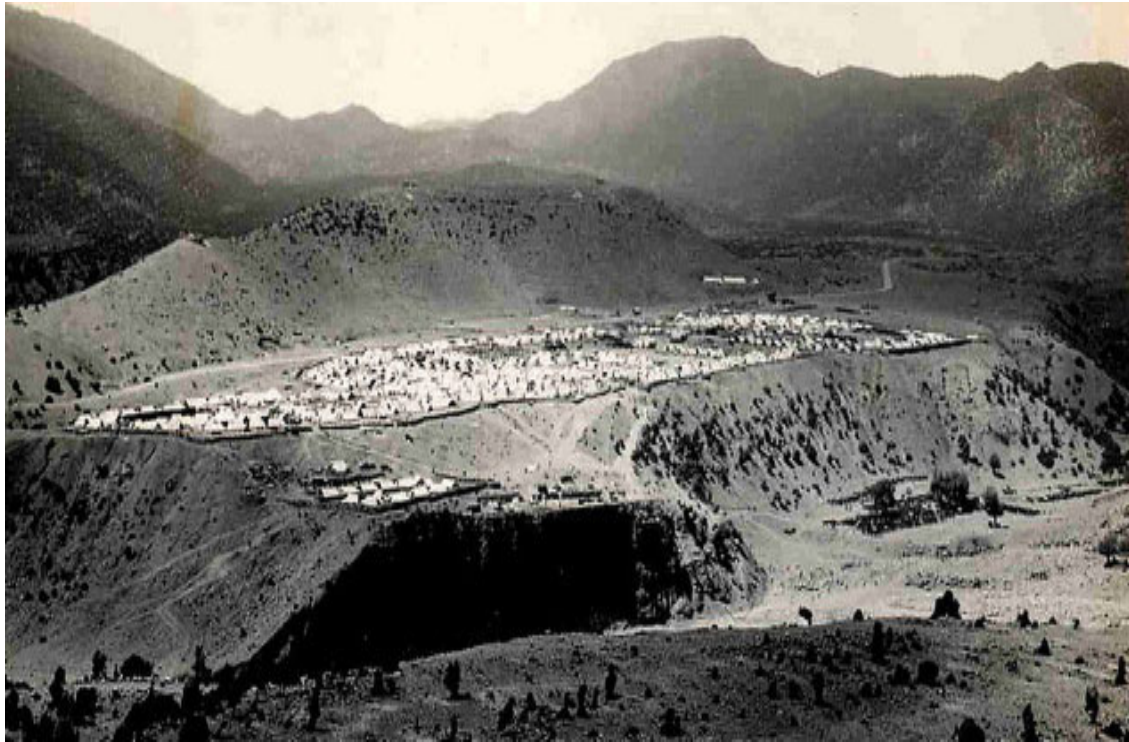
10 - Mirza Ali Khan, the Faqir of Ipi. The British conducted military operations in Waziristan from 1936 to 1939. Although they achieved their initial objectives, they failed to capture their principal adversary, the Faqir of Ipi.

(Courtesy <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/9/93/Mirz>)



11 - In the 1920s and 1930s, the British Indian Army incorporated mechanized units and RAF aircraft, when the British had to conduct military operations on the North-West Frontier. As soon as possible, control was resumed from the army by the civil authorities (the Political Agents).

(Courtesy <http://ricks.foreignpolicy.com/files/ricks2b.jpg>)



12 - British Indian Army forces at Razani base, North Waziristan, in August 1938.

Curzon's initial policy had been to drastically reduce regular army garrisons in the tribal agencies of North-West Frontier Province. The policy was maintained, but after 1919 with the exception of Waziristan. Periodically there were large Army forces in North and South Waziristan.

(Courtesy <http://boingboing.net/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/waz.jpg>)

In May 1919, the Afridis and the Khyber Rifles should have borne the brunt of the Afghan attack. The morale of the Khyber Rifles had suffered during the First World War from pro-Turkish propaganda, revolutionary fervour and information from India, and from rumours that the British intended to kill large number of Afridis (the Khyber Rifles) with their artillery. Some two-thirds deserted, although some 350 remained loyal.⁵⁷ The failure of the Khyber Rifles had also been caused by the British decision to withdraw from their posts in Waziristan, and the consequent lack of confidence this conveyed. The Chief Commissioner, Roos-Keppel was particularly dismayed by the events of 1919 (and what he saw as 'disloyalty' by the Afridis) and his overheated paper advice to the Viceroy hastened Roos-Keppel's retirement.⁵⁸ After the 1919 war, the Army took over the defensive responsibility in the Khyber Pass area, and the Khyber Rifles was disbanded (in 1919). It was reformed in 1945-46, using as the foundation an Afridi battalion which had served overseas with the British Army in the 1939-45 war.⁵⁹

Waziristan

The 1901-02 Mahsud Blockade. The new Curzon policy began in 1901, but Waziristan was an early exception to the policy's success elsewhere. The Mahsuds had massacred border police at isolated posts (Zam and Baran) in 1900 and 1901, and had accumulated unpaid fines. It was estimated the Mahsuds had 10,000 armed men. Eschewing a costly offensive military expedition, in December 1900 Curzon authorized a blockade of the Mahsuds. A 300-mile cordon was established around their main mountain sanctuaries by a brigade of three battalions and a cavalry regiment, and the supply of grain and necessities was much reduced, and prices rose to famine levels.

After twelve months, it was decided a more aggressive approach was needed and reinforcements were sent. British mobile columns went into the Mahsud sanctuaries in November-December 1901, burning villages, confiscating grain and food stocks, and destroying cattle. By early 1902 the Mahsud had submitted – and paid the fines –

⁵⁷ Chenevix Trench, *The Frontier Scouts*, 31.

⁵⁸ Tripodi, *Edge of Empire*, Chapter 5, 224, 227-228.

⁵⁹ Chenevix Trench, *The Frontier Scouts*, 31, 263-264.

after the death of 130 tribesmen and the wounding of a further 250. The winter cold of the mountains affected the British and Indian Army troops, who were operating at altitudes of 5,000 to 6,000 feet. Captain (later Brigadier-General) Reginald Dyer, later of Amritsar (1919), was a staff officer during the blockade. The peace in Waziristan was not permanent, and British had to launch another expedition in 1904.⁶⁰ For example, in 1905 a sepoy of the South Waziristan Militia rushed into the Officers' Mess during dinner (interrupting the meal) and bayoneted the knowledgeable Commandant of the Militia, Lieutenant-Colonel Richard Harman. According to Akbar Ahmad, at Wana, Harman's portrait still stares down upon the diners in the South Waziristan Scouts Mess.⁶¹

Waziristan 1919-20. It will be recalled that one of the major areas of operations in the 1919 Afghan War was in Waziristan. During the First World War, the British had to put down uprisings there in 1915 and 1917. In the 1919 war, the British did not have enough military forces to commit to both Waziristan, as well as to the Khyber Pass area. The British chose to reinforce the Khyber Pass. Dealing with Waziristan, the commander of the 7th (Bannu) Brigade, Brigadier E.G. Lucas, could not predict the Afghan line of advance through Waziristan. With its lack of lateral roads, if he had deployed on the wrong approach, he could not have moved his force laterally to meet the correct enemy line of advance. Lucas therefore ordered a withdrawal of the North Waziristan Militia from its exposed posts.

In the south, the commandant of the South Waziristan Militia, Major Russell, learnt that the Afghan forces were approaching Wana, so he had to withdraw from a number of his posts, eventually conducting a withdrawal by foot (with some camels for stores) from his posts to Wana, and then rearwards to Fort Sandeman, managing to extract only 165 troops.⁶² Russell's parties withdrew from Wana to the south down two routes: the first route through Pir Gwazha Pass to Toi Khula, across the Gomal and across the Tesh Plain, then to the Zhob River and via Mogul Kot; the second route was Wana to Kharab Kot, then Khajuri Kach and the Gomal, and then marching

⁶⁰ Nigel Collett, *The Butcher of Amritsar: General Reginald Dyer* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2006) (GoogleBooks version – accessed 12 February 2012), 86-89.

⁶¹ Ahmad, "An Aspect of the Colonial Encounter in the Frontier", 2. Chenevix Trench, *The Frontier Scouts*, 18-21.

⁶² Jacobsen, "British Retreat from Waziristan", 1-6.

south-west following the Zhob River. As a feat of endurance, it was a fine achievement. In terms of maintaining an element of the Sandeman system – the tribal levies and binding the Wazirs and Afridis by service to the administration – the event was a failure. Of the 1,800 in the South Waziristan Militia, about 100 were killed, others were unaccounted for, and 1,100 deserted to join the tribal fighters or the Afghan forces. Virtually all of the 1,100 deserters were Wazirs or Afridis.⁶³ The precautions taken, when later re-constructing these Waziristan forces, will be discussed in the next chapter.

Further tribal raids from Waziristan into the settled areas continued through 1919, with 225 killed and 400 or more wounded or kidnapped between August and November. The 1914-18 war, through gun-running, had increased the flow of modern weapons into Waziristan. Despite having poorly trained troops and little available transport and logistics, the British were forced to act. They appointed Major-General Sir Skipton Climo as GOC Waziristan Field Force, with six brigades supported by cavalry, artillery, engineers, and aircraft (bombers and fighters) based at Tank. Eventually the Force numbered 29,000 combatants and 33,000 support troops.⁶⁴

The campaign was conducted in four phases. First, in November, the British reoccupied the Tochi Valley with two brigades (against the Tochi Wazirs) and without incident. They bombed the Mahsud villages from the air, hoping to win the campaign without extensive land operations. The Mahsuds proved obdurate. In the second phase, the Derajat Column under Major-General Andrew Skeen attempted to advance into Tank Zam Valley on 18 December, and was bloodily repulsed (at Palosina). In attempting to establish a major picquet on the high ground, two Indian Army battalions were badly mauled (95 killed and 140 wounded). Further attacks on picquets followed, although in a defensive battle, the Column killed 250 Mahsuds (and wounded 300) while British casualties were 66 dead and 250 wounded.⁶⁵ Tim

⁶³ Chenevix Trench, *The Frontier Scouts*, 41, 45.

⁶⁴ Colonel (Retired) Muhammad Yahya Effendi, “Military Operations in Waziristan: From a Historical Perspective (1849-1947)”, *Central Asia*, Issue 62, (Research Journal of the Area Studies Centre (Russia, China and Central Asia), University of Peshawar): 3, www.asc-centralasia.ed.pk/Issue_62/01-Military_Operations (accessed 12 February 2012).

⁶⁵ Muhammad Yahya Effendi, “Military Operations in Waziristan: From a Historical Perspective (1849-1947)”, 4.

Moreman commented that the heavy casualties inflicted on the British in the intense 18-21 December battles:

... indicated that the majority of its infantry battalions were incapable of carrying out comparatively simple tactical operations against the tribesmen. A combination of poor leadership, lack of basic individual training and almost complete ignorance of the specialized principles and minor tactics of hill warfare had played directly into Mahsud and Wazir hands. Mahsud lashkars had demonstrated a degree of military skill and tactical effectiveness never before encountered. Their carefully organized attacks were unprecedented; with well concealed marksmen providing sufficient covering fire ... enabling swordsmen to close and engage in hand-to-hand combat.⁶⁶

The radius of action and mobility of the British forces was reduced by their heavy reliance on logistics – they could not operate more than three days (transport time) away from their supply line.

In the third phase, the British faced further tactical difficulties, in particular in the forcing of a major defile in the Tank Zam Valley, the Ahnai Tangi defile. The Mahsud fought an extremely skillful defensive battle. The British lost about 450 casualties, but by mid-January 1920 they had captured the defile. They did so by employing the principle of war of “surprise” – contrary to their past practice, they launched a night attack. General Skeen made “surprise” the theme for most of his subsequent operations. From 29 December 1919 to 20 January 1920, the British fought over twenty engagements of brigade strength or more. The lessons of frontier warfare and the Waziristan campaign, including surprise, were eventually absorbed by the other formations of the Indian Army.⁶⁷

One (posthumous) VC was awarded, in the face of a Mahsud offensive, for a counter-attack led by Lieutenant William Kenny (4/39th Garhwal Rifles) leading a section of ten men. The Royal Air Force played their part in the mission, destroying a large number of Mahsud villages.

⁶⁶ Tim Moreman, *The Army in India and the Development of Frontier Warfare, 1849-1947*, quoted in Muhammad Yahya Effendi, “Military Operations in Waziristan: From a Historical Perspective (1849-1947)”, 4.

⁶⁷ Muhammad Yahya Effendi, “Military Operations in Waziristan: From a Historical Perspective (1849-1947)”, 5.

The key lesson of the Waziristan campaign according to H. de Watteville (1925), was that in mountain warfare the benefits of “mass” and equipment will rarely be present and the enemy will always be particularly expert in the use of ground. Therefore, in attacking the enemy (who knows the ground):

Those who attack such a formidable fighting man over terrain of his choosing, must be able to compete with him individually on more or less equal terms. Otherwise the handicap becomes too great. So it comes about that, in operations of this nature, the bludgeon methods applicable to mass fighting must yield to the finer art of individual combat. But even a high pitch of training adequate for warfare on the plain is hardly sufficient for this class of fighting. The soldier required for frontier warfare must be trained for the end in view.⁶⁸

In response to these problems, the Indian Army’s Northern Command opened a Mountain Warfare School at Abbottabad in February 1920, with experienced instructors. The School codified and taught innumerable lessons of frontier and unconventional warfare which had previously been “passed on” informally – or not at all. The School was highly successful, but after a period Army HQ informed unit commanding officers that they were responsible for “mountain warfare training”, without the assistance of a specialist school.⁶⁹

In the fourth phase, military operations continued in a minor way in Waziristan from 1920 to 1923, but the Mahsuds had been made to pay a high price in the earlier phases. In 1923 the regular army troops were withdrawn into the cantonments – the exception being that a mixed brigade of regular troops was henceforth permanently based at Razmak. The Waziristan militias were reorganized; two new forces were created: in North Waziristan, the Tochi Scouts; and in the South, the South Waziristan Scouts. The Army did not re-garrison Wana until 1929.

Lessons of Waziristan 1919-20. The British Indian Army post-operational report on Waziristan (1919-20) emphasized nine key lessons. The first was the importance of well-trained soldiers and officers, trained in accordance with the principles of war and the Field Service Regulations. Secondly, soldiers and particularly infantrymen, had to

⁶⁸ H. de Watteville, *Waziristan 1919- 1920 (Campaigns and Their Lessons)* (London: Constable and Co., 1925), quoted in Muhammad Yahya Effendi, “Military Operations in Waziristan: From a Historical Perspective (1849-1947)”, 5.

⁶⁹ Moreman, “Army in India and Frontier Warfare 1914-1939”, 4.

be expert and confident in the use of the standard weapons, particularly the rifle and bayonet. Thirdly, there was a lack of fire discipline, a lack of observation and adjustment of fire, poor use of ground and cover (in the mountainous terrain), and hence undue casualties. Fourthly, permanent picquets and protection of the high ground had to occur, including picquets for lines-of-communication. Fifthly, “surprise” was a key principle of war in frontier operations, and night advances and night ambushing, as the campaign went on, had been most advantageous against the enemy. Associated with this, the variation of British protective measures for camps, routes and mixing-up mechanized methods with cavalry during advances, kept the tribesmen uncertain. “Leaving the tribesmen guessing” was the key. Sixth, permanent administrative commandants were needed at Dera Ismail Khan and at Bannu, so as to “free-up” the brigadiers in the forward areas from having to deal with the minutiae of administration and logistics.⁷⁰

On the seventh factor, (the new) air operations, this was a morale boost for the ground troops, but the pilots had to understand mountain warfare from the land forces perspective. Air/ground communications needed improvement, but when there was good communication, aeroplanes “when employed in tactical co-operation did considerable damage and helped in no small measure towards the success of many of the actions.” Overall, however, because of the mountainous terrain and the tribesmen’s skill in concealment, “bombing and tactical reconnaissance did not fulfil expectations.” Air photography was of great value: its collection, it was decided, should be supplemented by using trained observers in the air; and ground force officers should study air photography as an adjunct to tactics. The eighth factor was “all-arms teams” and the need to combine use of the 3.7-inch howitzer with a quick-firing weapon, either with Vickers machine-guns, or with mountain guns. The ninth and last lesson was the importance of clean drinking water and sanitation and, (contra 1917 operations) how healthy the force was during the 1919-20 Waziristan campaign.⁷¹

⁷⁰ General Staff Army Headquarters India, *Operations in Waziristan 1919 – 1920* (Calcutta: Superintendent Government Printing India, 1921), 146-150, (copy provided by the NDU Library). Hereafter, it will be cited as *Operations in Waziristan 1919 – 1920*.

⁷¹ *Operations in Waziristan 1919 -1920*, 150-151.

One of the principal Waziristan commanders, Major-General Skeen was promoted to the rank of General and knighted, and was Chief of the General Staff (Indian Army) from 1924 to 1928. In 1932 and retired to Worcestershire, Sir Andrew published *Passing It On: Fighting the Pushtun on Afghanistan's Frontier*.

Skeen commented on the importance of junior commanders thinking all the time, particularly when on the move. He described the enemy as usually invisible, and hence the importance of tactical layout, reconnaissance, picquets, and flank and rear protection. He concluded on the likely form of enemy action: “probably no sign of anything till the burst of fire, and then the swift rush with knives, the stripping of the dead, and the unhurried mutilation of the infidels.”⁷²

In a re-published version of Skeen's book, the 2010 editors have derived seven key lessons (and some examples), applicable today, from Skeen's experience:

- Be able to read and use (mountainous) terrain. For example, mountains are full of “dead space” where “a man or a unit can move unseen or protected from enemy fire.”
- Understand your opponent. “Your adversary can be fooled” and is a creature of habit, particularly when he considers himself safe. Think of his cultural preconceptions, and try and lure him into a trap – e.g. for weapons.
- Understand yourself. Vary your own routines and SOPs – do not set patterns.
- Know the basics, and do them. Obstacles, range cards, call for fire, pre-registering defensive fire, use of mortars, night-firing and supporting machine-guns on tripods, principles of movement, etc.
- Develop and hone your skills and competence. Stay fit, learn how to shoot in mountainous terrain (determining range, not shooting high or low, different wind, temperature, humidity), learn extra duties beyond platoon command, such as escorting larger convoys or how to work with local or coalition forces.

⁷² General Sir Andrew Skeen, *Passing It On: Fighting the Pushtun on Afghanistan's Frontier*, (1932) (Re-published and annotated: Fort Leavenworth, Kansas: Foreign Military Studies Office, 2010), 15, fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/documents/Skeen.pdf (accessed 12 February 2012).

- Control the high ground. In Skeen's time, by "crowning the heights" and picqueting. Today, by picquets, air assault or artillery might be used.
- Understand, and co-opt, the local population. Local tribesmen know where the enemy are, and their routes. Junior officers have the greatest contact with local people – learn the language, their customs and hierarchy. Can you provide better security for them than the enemy? Local people are pragmatic, and will support the side which will stay the longest and provide security and employment opportunities. Be aware of the reprisals the enemy may carry-out against local people. British officers learnt the local languages.⁷³

Pink's War (1924). Further troubles developed in 1924. In response to unrest, the British launched land operations in Waziristan from July to October 1924. At the conclusion, the Abdur Rahman Khel tribe and three other tribes remained unsubdued. In 1925, the Royal Air Force decided to independently attempt to crush the tribes, without Army support. It was known as Pink's War after the RAF officer commanding, Wing Commander Richard Pink. The RAF deployed Bristol fighters and De Havilland DH9s to airstrips at Miranshah (North Waziristan) and to Tank (on the fringe of Waziristan). In March-April 1925 the RAF attacked the tribal strongholds in the mountains, and 1 May 1925 the tribal leaders sought peace. To the disadvantage of the frontier tribes, in the British inter-service battles of the 1920s, Pink's war was part of the RAF's fight to gain credibility against the older services, the Army and the Navy.

Air Force on the Frontier Generally. The British used the Air Force initially in two ways: for reconnaissance, mapping and air photography; and later in a formalized process of "aerial proscription." In the early years, the Pushtuns "thought aeroplanes were unsporting" and downed pilots were savagely put to death. As time went on, air warfare was somewhat accepted, and the tribes became proficient at shooting at them, sometimes bringing them down. Eventually the British developed a procedure for threatening the tribes with air power unless they conceded to the government's demand. Leaflets of warning, in the local dialect, would be airdropped, announcing

⁷³ Skeen, *Passing It On*, xxvi – xxxiv.

that bombing of x and y specified villages would occur unless the demands were met. From the British perspective, it was very economical (compared to land forces) and often effective in forcing tribal concessions. The soldier and novelist, John Masters, commented that to a large extent, much of the tribesmen's wealth was in his flocks, herds and grain, rather than in his small villages, and the analogy of "bombing western-style cities" was not valid. It may not have been a "fair" form of warfare, but the British did impose a number of restrictions, responsibilities to the 'enemy', and rules of engagement on the RAF crews and aircraft. As Masters commented, life for the pilots had its frustrations, with primitive aircraft, difficult mountain flying conditions, responsibilities to the soldiers on the ground, rules of engagement, and "a lapful of instructions, and dire thoughts of castration."⁷⁴

1936-39 and the Faqir of Ipi. The 1930s segment of the Waziristan story began in 1936. One of the factors was a perception of British weakness following a number of constitutional concessions on eventual Indian self-government, in the Government of India Act 1935. The second factor was the emergence of one of those charismatic religious and political leaders who periodically emerged on the frontier, Mirza Ali Khan, the Faqir of Ipi (1897-1960). The third element was the elopement of a Hindu girl (a minor, and her conversion to Islam) with a Muslim man, and the British judicial decision at Bannu that the Muslim man be convicted and imprisoned for removing a minor (kidnapping).⁷⁵

The decision enraged the Faqir of Ipi (of the Tori Khel Wazirs) and his kinsmen, the Daur tribesmen, maliks and mullahs, and they moved from the Tochi to the Khaisora Valley to incite the Tori Khel Waziris. The Faqir succeeded in creating some (uncharacteristic) unity between the Torikhel Wazirs, the Mahsuds and the Bhattannis, and he declared jihad against the British. Another factor at the time was the disruption caused by the Red Shirt movement. There was then a tribal guerrilla campaign, with the Faqir of Ipi as its champion.⁷⁶ The military operations involved the Indian Army, the RAF and the embryonic Indian Air Force.

⁷⁴ John Masters, *Bugles and a Tiger* (London: Michael Joseph, 1956 – Reprinted in Lahore: National Book Foundation of Pakistan), 213-216.

⁷⁵ Chenevix Trench, *The Frontier Scouts*, 148-149.

⁷⁶ Milan Hauner, "One Man against Empire: The Faqir of Ipi and the British in Central Asia on the Eve of and during the Second World War", *Journal of Contemporary History* (Vol. 16, No. 1, The Second

The Waziristan operations developed in four phases: the unsuccessful British demonstration march of two columns (November 1936); the wider insurrection and the reinforcement with four brigades (1937); the withdrawal of the additional brigades in late 1937 - early 1938; and the flare-up in 1938-39.

In the British “show of force” march, the two columns were designed to join-up at Bichhe Kashai (in the Khaisora Valley). One column commenced from the garrison at Razmak (from the east, heading west); the other column (from the Bannu Brigade) commenced from Mir Ali (from the north, heading south). Neither column did well, the Razmak column having to fight an intensive battle 10 miles out of Bichhe Kashkai.⁷⁷ The Mir Ali column encountered more formidable opposition – it marched into a carefully planned, well-executed ambush, and the Bannu Brigade suffered 130 casualties.⁷⁸

In 1937 the various Waziristan tribes united, and by April 1937 the British had brought in four extra brigades, dispersed between Razmak, Bannu and Wana. It was estimated there were 4,000 enemy tribesmen and, at their peak, the British forces comprised 61,000 troops plus the RAF.⁷⁹

Muhammad Yahya Effendi calls the November “show of force” or flag marches, which were the decision of the Resident, James Acheson, as being based “a fatally flawed assumption by the Resident”. Acheson assumed that, if pressure was applied to the Tori Khel, they would either hand over or drive out the Faqir of Ipi.⁸⁰ Yahya continued:

The flag march into the Khaisora Valley was a near disaster, all the hard-earned lessons of 1919-1923 went by the board, the demonstration of force was a shoddy affair; and the British had to face “a new challenge to the government” which “emerged in the form of a radical religious leader”, all

World War: Part 1: January 1981): 183-212) Republished at www.khyber.org/publications/021-025/faqiripi.shtml 5, (accessed 21 October 2011) .

⁷⁷ Chenevix Trench, *The Frontier Scouts*, 149-151.

⁷⁸ Masters, *Bugles and a Tiger*, 201.

⁷⁹ Moreman, “Army in India and Frontier Warfare 1914-1939”, 4.

⁸⁰ Muhammad Yahya Effendi, “Military Operations in Waziristan: From a Historical Perspective (1849-1947)”, 6.

because “a series of poor decisions by both civil and military officials contributed materially to the ensuing chaos.”⁸¹

In the second phase (British reinforcement), in April 1937, the British lost 45 killed and 47 wounded when a convoy from Wana (the Manzai-Wana Road) was ambushed by the tribesmen in the Shahur Tangi valley or defile.⁸² On 11/12 May 1937, the British launched a most significant operation at Iblanke, seeking to advance upon Arsol Kot to apprehend the Faqir of Ipi. If the Faqir could be killed or neutralized, the war was likely to end. This was the turning point of the campaign. The only approach onto Arsol Khot was via the steep and narrow Sre Mela Valley onto the Sham Plain.

The divisional commander, Major-General Alan Hartley (his division comprised the Abbottabad and Bannu Brigades, and Hartley was later Deputy C-in-C of the Indian Army)⁸³ took a leaf from General Skeen (1919-20) and decided that the plan had to emphasize surprise. Instead of proceeding up the valley, he relied on the advice of Tochi Scouts officers that there was a very difficult, but just passable, foot route to outflank the enemy along the Iblanke Ridge. Hartley decided to put a Brigade (with 725 mules) through the razorback Iblanke Ridge route – at night – a very bold plan, but backed up by a highly-believable deception plan. The Wazirs were totally surprised and Hartley’s Division advanced upon Arsol Kot with hardly any resistance. Whilst they failed to capture the Faqir of Ipi, they destroyed Arsol Kot – “razed it to the ground”. In the process, the British discovered the Faqir’s cave-headquarters – called by the British “the Vicarage.”⁸⁴ The British began systematic “pacification operations”, using troops, light tanks, artillery and six Air Force squadrons, and began to destroy the hostile villages.

The insurrection began to reduce in late 1937 and the British withdrew their extra brigades. In the second half of 1937, the British began constructing roads in order

⁸¹ Alan Warren, *Waziristan: the Faqir of Ipi, and the Indian Army* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 80, quoted in Muhammad Yahya Effendi, “Military Operations in Waziristan: From a Historical Perspective (1849-1947)”, 6.

⁸² Some of the events are described in Chenevix Trench, *The Frontier Scouts*, 159-164.

⁸³ Later General Sir Alan Hartley, Deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army during the Second World War. He had been Commanding Officer of Probyn’s Horse (5th Lancers) in the 1920s.

⁸⁴ Chenevix Trench, *The Frontier Scouts*, 167-174. Muhammad Yahya Effendi, “Military Operations in Waziristan: From a Historical Perspective (1849-1947)”, 6-7.

open-up central Waziristan, and up to 5,000 Wazirs and 2,000 Mahsuds (of fighting age) were engaged in paid road work, which gave them an alternative to fighting.⁸⁵ Yahya Effendi notes that although the Mahsuds engaged in heavy fighting at different stages, they would not join the Faqir of Ipi's movement. Even his own Tori Khel Wazirs were divided on whether to support him or not, which "can be attributed to the adroitness of the British political officers."⁸⁶

The Waziristan problems resumed in 1938-39, including a tribal raid into the town of Bannu, which killed many civilians. The British never captured the Faqir of Ipi, but the Waziristan problem quietened down in 1939, and there was sporadic violence but a reasonably peaceful situation until 1947.

A lieutenant in the Waziristan campaign, John Masters of the 4th Gurkha Rifles (and later a Hollywood scriptwriter), recalled the importance of tactical ability and surprise. The country around his brigade's base camp at Miranshah "was a stony plain split by low ridges and dry watercourses, all sparsely covered with sagebrush and scrub. This was the perfect terrain for the most popular of all Pathan sports, night sniping." To protect his base against this, the Brigadier used the tanks – deploying them to drive around the plain, and open-up with searchlights and machine-gun fire into the tribesmen's firing positions, and disrupt them.⁸⁷ Masters commented on one brilliant tactician, with a sixth sense:

The most illuminating [stories] were about an officer of infantry, a man who had been a major in an earlier campaign. Whatever his overall faults of character there is no doubt that he had a superb, almost supernatural tactical sense. Once he ran up and ordered a group of soldiers to open fire, without warning, on a funeral procession of Pathan men and women that was wending peacefully along the road a hundred yards from the battalion's camp. Doubtfully they fired. The sudden slaughter was seen by an appalled brigadier, who soon arrived to put everyone in sight under arrest. But the 'women' had other things besides rifles concealed under their *burqas*, and the coffin contained two alive and badly wanted outlaws, and also two thousand rounds of stolen ammunition. No one ever found out how the major knew

⁸⁵ Chenevix Trench, *The Frontier Scouts*, 180.

⁸⁶ Muhammad Yahya Effendi, "Military Operations in Waziristan: From a Historical Perspective (1849-1947)", 7.

⁸⁷ Masters, *Bugles and a Tiger*, 225-226.

these things. He just did, in the same way that, tactically, he could see through a hill and know what the other side was like.⁸⁸

The Red Shirts: Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan

More a political movement than a tribal revolt, Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan (1890-1988) was from Utmanzai near Peshawar. He believed that social activism was preferable to armed revolt. In the 1920s he formed the Khudai Khidmatgar movement (the servants of God), also known as the Red Shirts. They advocated an independent, united, secular India, and opposed Partition and the Muslim League. Eventually the movement had a strength of 100,000 and it dominated North-West Frontier Province politics until 1947. It used non-violent means and Ghaffar Khan developed a strong relationship with Gandhi. Amongst other themes, the movement called upon Pushtun tribesmen collectively to help the Congress Party “to free the sub-continent from the British yoke.”⁸⁹

Ghaffar Khan was arrested by the British in 1930, and in a consequent demonstration in Peshawar, some 200 protesters in a crowd were shot by British Indian Army troops. Ghaffar Khan did not fare well in independent Pakistan, was under house arrest from 1948 to 1954, experienced various subsequent periods of arrest and detention, and he died while under house arrest in 1988.

Military and Other Thoughts on Frontier Warfare

The writer, Muhammad Yahya Effendi, has commented that the British were successful overall (and in the long term), including in Waziristan because they thought strategically about the problem of the frontier, and what they were trying to achieve. (In this paper’s analysis, British management of the frontier was a merely a means to an end – the end of securing British India from foreign incursion.) In the first place, the British restricted the strategic space of the tribes, by constraining them

⁸⁸ Masters *Bugles and a Tiger*, 209. John Masters also recounted the mutual savagery of frontier warfare. He noted the treatment sometimes meted out to those British Indian Army soldiers captured by the Pushtuns: “Sometimes they would peg the prisoner out and with a stick force his jaws so wide open that he could not swallow, and then the women would urinate in his open mouth till he drowned.” (p. 211).

⁸⁹ Hauner, “One Man against Empire: The Faqir of Ipi”, 5.

in their own areas, and preventing any spillover of the revolt into adjoining areas. Secondly, and at the same time, the British permitted the tribes the tactical latitude to release their surplus reserves of energy, and burn themselves out in a controlled environment. Thirdly, the British primary objective was that the recalcitrant, themselves, should request cessation of hostilities and negotiate, but on British terms. Fourthly, the British, despite blunders, managed all of the above because they remained faithful to the cardinal principles they had laid down (based on Curzon), for the administration of the North-West Frontier of India.⁹⁰ As this description has indicated, the period from 1901 to 1939 was not necessarily one of “incessant tribal disputes” between the British and the Pushtun tribes. Often there were disputes between the tribes themselves. There were long periods without major military campaigns; for example, there were no major campaigns in Waziristan from 1925 to 1936.

On the specific developments in frontier warfare, the British had to deal with better armaments and better tactics among the tribes as time went on. Although the Mountain Warfare School was short-lived, there was improved military doctrine – by 1925 *The Manual of Operations on the North-West Frontier of India* had been issued. British and Indian Army units did begin to absorb the lessons in the 1920s, especially when they were stationed adjacent to the frontier in Covering Force Districts and took the time to train for mountain warfare. Nonetheless, there was a failure to adapt in the 1936-37 Waziristan operations; for example the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders battalion suffered unnecessary casualties because of its failure to adapt to frontier warfare techniques. By 1939, new and improved doctrine had been issued, called *Frontier Warfare (Army and Royal Air Force) 1939*, which incorporated all-arms lessons, mechanization, frontier techniques and air operations all in the one volume.⁹¹

The British approach was not quite a modern counter-insurgency approach. Their strategic “ends and means” equation was not about building Pushtun acceptance of the political status quo, or building a society in NWFP which was settled and had the

⁹⁰ Muhammad Yahya Effendi, “Military Operations in Waziristan: From a Historical Perspective (1849-1947)”, 8.

⁹¹ T.F. Moreman, “ ‘Small Wars and ‘Imperial Policing’: The British Army and the Theory and Practice of Colonial Warfare in the British Empire, 1919 – 1939” in Brian Holden Reid, *Military Power: Land Warfare in Theory and Practice* (London: Frank Cass, 1997), 114-117, 120.

benefits of British economic, social and humanitarian endeavours. The British had decided that endemic warfare was the social way-of-life for the Pushtun tribes, and there was little that the British could do to encourage them into some form of polity. The ends and means for the British were in securing the frontier against foreign adversaries, while accepting some risk in an ungoverned strip of territory by affording a large measure of tribal autonomy, and allowing the vast bulk of British India's inhabitants to go about their lives in a settled way, and subject to the rule of law (but without democracy).

Nonetheless, the British approach to warfare did emphasize some of the attributes of successful modern counter-insurgency doctrine.⁹² Firstly, the prime focus of British forces was not the attrition of the enemy or tribal force. It was about sufficient attrition of the tribal force, so as to bring them back to the negotiating table or back under resumed control under the Political Agent. Secondly, the British (both political and military) emphasized the collection and analysis of human intelligence and associated with this, the use of tribal levies, native speakers, and their own linguists/officers of the Scouts. Thirdly, the British were not obsessed with force protection to the exclusion of carrying out the mission, although the best units and formations maintained their security by controlling the high ground as they advanced, and other measures. The British did not isolate themselves from the local inhabitants, but linked-in with them, as the locals were the element most likely to provide them with intelligence.

Fourthly the British Indian Army did not just practice “reactive tactics”⁹³ – the best Indian Army units and commanders employed surprise, deception and aggression. These lessons were sometimes forgotten, as at the start of the 1919 and 1936 Waziristan campaigns. The British did commence to integrate new weapons systems into their approach – (earlier, the Maxim gun), advances in infantry weapons, the air force, and mechanization and tanks. But in terms of modern counter-insurgency doctrine, they were not “humanitarian” with the local inhabitants, and employed

⁹² The “headline terms” – attrition, intelligence, excessive force protection – are from H.S. Rothstein, *Afghanistan and the Troubled Future of Unconventional Warfare* (Delhi: Manas Publications, 2006), 171, cited in Muhammad Yahya Effendi, “Military Operations in Waziristan: From a Historical Perspective (1849-1947)”, 7-8. The analysis is mine.

⁹³ Muhammad Yahya Effendi, “Military Operations in Waziristan: From a Historical Perspective (1849-1947)”, 8.

“hearts and minds” only in a selective sense. The British destroyed “guilty villages” and practiced economic warfare on the tribes – but towards a negotiated object (with the Political Agent). They did try to carefully select the villages and targets associated with the “problem” tribe, and spare the innocent areas (or tribes with whom they had no quarrel).

Finally, the British did understand the limitations of military force and how the enemy’s object (and will) and one’s own (inter-related object and will) clashed and intersected. One Pakistani writer has quoted the 1990s British general, Sir Rupert Smith, approvingly in this context:

What tends to happen is that for various reasons – such as lack of political will and domestic support, or lack of forces, or lack of clear idea of the outcome, or all of these – we settle on the military achieving amelioration or containment: we deploy force. Then, when other civilian measures and agencies – political, diplomatic, legal, economic – fail to resolve the matter as we wish, we seek to use military force or its threat to achieve the result we want by deterrence or coercion: we employ force. There is nothing wrong in this gradual response provided one knows the desired outcome by the time deterrence measures are taken; for if such knowledge is absent then, as already described one will achieve no more than containment. The reason for this is that the opponent, who is amongst the people, is also using military force to deter or coerce – but he does so knowing his desired outcome.⁹⁴

The British overall strategic success was based upon civil and military means; and we will explore the civilian and political factors in the next chapter.

⁹⁴ General Sir Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: the Art of War in the Modern World* (London, Allen Lane, 2005), 376-377, quoted in Muhammad Yahya Effendi, “Military Operations in Waziristan: From a Historical Perspective (1849-1947)”, 8.

Chapter 4

Not Quite Soft Power: The Politicals

The key perspective on the British approach to the North-West Frontier from 1901 to 1947 was that it was predominantly a non-military approach. The military was part of the means, but its ends - the ends of policy - were strategic and political – military action was not an end in itself. The term “soft power” is not quite accurate. Joseph Nye deemed soft power as:

... the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. It arises from the attractiveness of a country’s culture, political ideals, and policies. When our policies are seen as legitimate in the eyes of others, our soft power is enhanced.⁹⁵

The British from Curzon’s time re-fashioned their approach to frontier affairs in a particular way. In the first place, the policy was pragmatic and financially achievable and achieved its object, the security of British India. Secondly, the policy was designed to not unduly antagonize the nearest neighbour, the Amir of Afghanistan. Thirdly, the policy to a large extent met the aspirations of the frontier tribes for a high degree of legal and social autonomy. And fourthly, the policy reduced British military garrisons, and reduced the financial costs.

If a matter is extremely important in policy terms, it will be under the control of the chief executive. When he carved-off the NWFP from the Punjab, Curzon made sure the new Province was directly under his, the Viceroy’s control. The Chief Commissioner and the civil officers of NWFP were members of the Viceroy’s own department, “the Foreign and Political Department of the Government of India” – and were not part of the Indian Civil Service. (The Department had been originally set up in 1783, and adopted the name “Foreign Department” in 1843 and “Foreign and Political Department in 1914.)

⁹⁵ (Book Review) “Soft Power by Joseph S. Nye Jr.”, 1, www.futurecasts.com/book_review_6-4.htm (accessed 3 December 2011).



13 - Sir George Roos-Kepel, Chief Commissioner of North-West Frontier Province from 1908 to 1919, and a noted Pashto linguist. Roos-Kepel is pictured here at Darwand in 1917 with the Nawab of the State of Amb.

(Courtesy http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/thumb/e/ec/1917_Darba)



14 - Sir George Cunningham, Governor of North-West Frontier Province (1937-1946) and (1947-48). He also played rugby for Scotland and England, and captained the St. Andrew's Golf Club. Governor-General Jinnah personally asked for Cunningham to return as Governor in 1947.
(Courtesy www.gstatic.com/hostedimg/c867c0b64401d404_large)



15 - Sir Olaf Caroe, Governor of North-West Frontier Province (1946-47) and Foreign Secretary of the Government of India (1939-46). As well as an extremely able “political”, Caroe wrote numerous scholarly works, including *The Pathans* (1958).

(Courtesy www.frontierwhoiswhi.com/data/thumbnails/1olafcaroe.JPG)

In 1937 the name Foreign and Political Department was replaced by the term “Indian Political Service”. The Foreign and Political Department did many things: it was chiefly concerned with indirect rule, for much of British India consisted of the Princely states, presided over by their hereditary rulers, advised by a British Resident belonging to the Department – “a political”. Next, the Department housed the officers of British India’s diplomatic service – its emissaries to Kabul, the Gulf and other areas. Finally, it hosted “the politicals” of Balochistan and NWFP – the officers who had chosen to make their careers in the frontier districts.⁹⁶

The politicals were remarkable men. Four examples - who reached the top of the service in NWFP - were Harold Deane, George Roos-Keppel, Olaf Caroe and George Cunningham. In any endeavour of government or policy “selecting the right men” for the task is a critical part of success.

The politicals, or the senior one in an agency, the Political Agent – literally “the agent of the Governor-General and Viceroy of India” - had direct responsibility for managing the frontier tribes in his agency, ensuring the security of the border region from foreign incursions or subversion, allowing the tribes internal autonomy, administering the Frontier Crimes Regulations (which allowed the tribes autonomy in their indigenous internal legal systems), commanding and administering the “armed civil forces” (the ACF – elements from village police up to formed units like the South Waziristan Scouts - which came under the civil administration, and not under the British Indian Army), and knowing and touring the tribes in his Agency. The Political Agent had a staff of junior political officers under him, often dispersed to other locations in the agency.

In times of extreme civil disorder, the Political Agent could hand over authority to the military in his area for a specific period of time, and the Agent temporarily became the “political adviser” to the General Officer Commanding the force. As John Masters commented, it was virtually martial law and “all the politicals took one pace sideways and one pace backward and, instead of telling their military opposite

⁹⁶ Terence Creagh Coen, *The Indian Political Service: A Study in Indirect Rule* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1971), 4, 47-54.

numbers what to do, assumed a knowledgeable air and advised them of the probable political effects of the action they intended to take.”⁹⁷

In their backgrounds, some of the politicals had transferred into the Political Service from the Army, some had come direct from the great British universities, and others had transferred in from the Indian Civil Service. In their remit, the Political Agent:

... was responsible for the explanation and execution of Government’s policy in all tribal matters, for all dealings with the tribes and for securing reparation from them for all offences committed by them against the outside world. He was also responsible for keeping his superiors informed of their attitude and intentions. In short, it was his business to know everybody and everything, to be aware which way the cat was going to jump, before it left the ground, and to keep it from jumping on forbidden soil. The Militia [later known as the ACF] was the instrument by which he secured the execution of his orders, if force, in small measure was required.⁹⁸

What of the careers of some of the “politicals”? From those four examples cited above, we can hope to draw some common themes or patterns in character, education and training. Harold Deane (1854-1908) was appointed the first political agent of the Malakand Agency (Dir, Swat and Chitral) in 1895. He had previously served in the Army. He was a political officer advising in the campaign of 1897-98 and is mentioned in Churchill’s description of the operations against the Mohmands.⁹⁹

Deane had been the assistant commissioner in charge of the Yusufzai sub-division of Peshawar. Caroe said of him – “to know and respect, and be known and liked by, the leaders of Yusufzai society means that a man has entered into a sort of Pathan freemasonry, and has reached a position in which the very quintessence of the Pathan spirit begins to be revealed to him.. Deane was such a man.” Caroe recalled that “in appearance he was imposing. Tall and spare, with a commanding presence and searching dark-blue eyes, he made just the impression of resolution and assurance that Pathans look for in a man. He was fearless and he stood firm. He had, too, a sardonic sense of humour for which he was long remembered.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Masters, *Bugles and a Tiger*, 205.

⁹⁸ Caroe, *The Pathans*, 470.

⁹⁹ Churchill, *The Story of the Malakand Field Force*, 100-105.

¹⁰⁰ Caroe, *The Pathans*, 421.

When Lord Curzon was determined that he would carve from the Punjab a separate North-West Frontier Province, he decided upon the able Harold Deane as the first Chief Commissioner, over the heads of more senior men. Deane “was able to utilize the name he bore among Pathans to reverse the old policy of the punitive expedition by military forces. It was because the tribes knew him to be utterly fearless, firm, honest and resolute that he became the true peace-maker ... he spoke and acted, and he was believed.”¹⁰¹ The strain was great, and Deane died young, aged fifty-three.

Deane’s successor was Sir George Roos-Keppel (1866-1921), of Dutch-Swedish heritage, who had begun his service in the Royal Scots Fusiliers and moved into political work in the Kurram and Khyber Agencies. While in the Kurram, Roos-Keppel had brought the Shia people under British protection (in 1892), at their own request. He worked closely with the Afridis and was Political Agent of the Khyber Agency from 1902 to 1908.¹⁰² Roos-Keppel was expert in the Pashto language and in 1901 he wrote new editions of T.B. Hughes’ translations of the *Ganj-e-Pashto* version of the Pashto text book, and in the same year Roos-Keppel authored a guidebook on colloquial Pashto called *The Pashto Manual*, which was subsequently reprinted. Roos-Keppel was NWFP’s Chief Commissioner from 1908 to 1919, and Caroe wrote of him (not unkindly, if at length) that he

can only be explained as a conscious poseur, determined to express in thought and action a behaviour studiously un-English. He loved to mingle sympathy with callousness, pride with easy familiarity, generosity with an ill-humour towards those who displeased him that could be vindictive. He was a man of strong character who stood above all those who surrounded him, a good friend, but a very dangerous enemy. A born ruler, he had a cynical appreciation of the weakness of human nature, and seldom gave others credit for any impulses of altruism. His person was huge, heavy and formidable, and his glare was likened, quite seriously, to that of a basilisk. ... Such a man did not inspire easy affection and he was often feared – never probably loved with tenderness. But he could, and did, inspire in many quarters a regard that fell not far short of adoration. ... He cared and worked for the Pathans, and he understood their every mood. ... A very fluent speaker of their language, he could turn a proverb, point a moral, quote a poet, make a domestic allusion in perfect timing and in communion with those who heard him. An actor on his chosen stage, he was able, as he who deals with a volatile people must be able, to turn at a moment’s notice from dignity to geniality, from argument to threat,

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 422.

¹⁰² Norval Mitchell, *Sir George Cunningham: A Memoir* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood, 1968), 29.

from command to appeal. Fearless of criticism, he had a genius for inspiring confidence in those he governed, and he received their confidence in return. More than any Englishman, if such he was, he is remembered still; he has been claimed as a sort of malik *in excelsis*, a Pathan among Pathans. ... with Roos-Keppel the more spontaneous expressions were clamped down and hidden beneath that grim austerity.¹⁰³

Roos-Keppel was a great believer in education, and in 1913 was the co-founder of Islamia College in Peshawar, with its extraordinary buildings and great tradition of education and learning. From the British perspective, the First World War could have created extreme disorder or a disaster on the North-West Frontier, given that Britain was engaged in a war in the Middle East against the Turkish empire. It was thanks to Roos-Keppel that NWFP largely got through the war with so little trouble.¹⁰⁴ He too died young, aged fifty-five.

Two successive Governors of NWFP were graduates of Magdalen College, Oxford, Sir George Cunningham (1888 -1963) and Sir Olaf Caroe (1892 - 1981). (The title and standing changed from Chief Commissioner in 1937.)¹⁰⁵ Sir George Cunningham was Governor from 1937 to 1946, and was so highly thought of that he was invited back, after Partition, by Governor-General Jinnah to serve as Governor NWFP from 1947, until ill-health forced him to retire the following year. He was a fine sportsman – he played international rugby (he captained both Scotland and England), and in his retirement in Scotland he was Captain of the St. Andrew's Golf Club.

Cunningham arrived in British India in 1911, began working in NWFP in 1914. He was Roos-Keppel's personal assistant from 1915 to 1919 and knew the frontier intimately from his constant tours with his Chief, as well from his other appointments. Cunningham had a 37 year career, most of it as a political on the North-West Frontier. Like his contemporaries, he spoke Pashto well and was very good at speeches and at swaying Pushtun gatherings, including jirgas. His biographer concluded that "he endeared himself to Pathans because he had the quality which they called fortitude or

¹⁰³ Caroe, *The Pathans*, 422-423.

¹⁰⁴ Creagh Coen, *The Indian Political Service*, 184.

¹⁰⁵ The change to the status of "Governor" (of NWFP) was partly prompted by the general concessions towards self-government in the Government of India Act 1935, and partly the influence of the Red Shirt Movement.

stoutness of mind and character.” Cunningham’s presence was almost a guarantee that things would go right.¹⁰⁶

Sir Olaf Caroe (1892 – 1981) was Governor of NWFP from 1946 to 1947. He had deep knowledge and great love for Pushtuns and for the NWFP but was cut from a more academic cloth. He first came to India with the British Army during the First World War and joined the Indian Civil Service in 1919, transferring to the Foreign and Political Department in 1923 and serving in NWFP for the next fourteen years. He was variously in charge of the districts of Mardan, Hazara, Kohat and Peshawar, and in 1937 assumed the senior administrative post of Chief Secretary, NWFP. Caroe had a fine intellect and was described as “singularly lacking in racial, or indeed, any kind of prejudice, although he could be a mordant critic of ignorance and inaccuracy.” He was appointed Foreign Secretary of the Government of India in 1939, running the External Affairs Department until 1946.¹⁰⁷

Caroe “thought afar and left a legacy” in strategic thinking and geopolitics, although one critic thought his geopolitical outlook was a “combination of anachronism and prescience.” As Foreign Secretary, in 1942 he established the Viceroy’s Studies Group, which produced strategic assessments and forward planning papers in the light of the expected British departure from the sub-continent. For example, Caroe, against the trends of the day, clearly saw the whole Indian Ocean area and its littorals as one political and economic region. The Group included the Chief Justice of India, Gwyer, two top-level economists and bureaucrats, Gregory and Wrench, General Sir Alan Hartley (Deputy Commander-in-Chief), Lieutenant-General Francis Tuker, and three civil servants, Peter Fleming, H.V. Hodson and Guy Wint, all of whom later had distinguished careers in the world of writing and journalism.¹⁰⁸ Caroe, as Governor in the turmoil of 1946-47, achieved the interesting combination of offending both Nehru

¹⁰⁶ Mitchell, *Sir George Cunningham*, 19, 181.

¹⁰⁷ Geoffrey Wheeler, “Obituaries: Sir Olaf Caroe, KCSI, KCIE, DLitt”, *Asian Affairs*, Volume 13, Issue 1 (1982), www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03068378208730062 (accessed 18 February 2012). “Sir Olaf Caroe”, www.desiistore.com/sirolaf.html (accessed 18 February 2012).

¹⁰⁸ David Omissi, “The Future of the Great Game: Sir Olaf Caroe, India’s Independence, and the Defence of Asia”, *The English Historical Review* (2007, CXXII (497): 856-857), <http://ehr.oxfordjournals.org/content/CXXII/497/856.full> (accessed 14 February 2012). Michael Silvestri, “When Everyone is Dead the Great Game is Finished”, *H-Albion* (April 2006), www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=11636 (accessed 14 February 2012). A.G. Noorani, “Caroe’s Lessons”, *Frontline*, (Volume 23, Issue 9, 6-19 May 2006) www.frontline.in/fl2309/stories/20060519001908300.htm (accessed 14 February 2012).

and Jinnah; Cunningham was Jinnah's choice for Governor NWFP. Caroe went on leave in mid-1947 (some say sacked by Mountbatten, at Nehru's urging), and retired to Sussex in England and to a career of scholarship.

From these and other careers, some common themes emerge about "selecting the right men" as politicals, and on education and training. In the first place, the British conceived the problems and issues as essentially civil, political and diplomatic in nature, rather than being primarily military. The politicals had primacy over the British Indian Army, except for the periods of military operations, as defined by the civil authority.¹⁰⁹ Next, the British were dealing with a very harsh environment and with complex and difficult human relationships. They selected the NWFP politicals from a variety of backgrounds – from young Army officers, from the universities and from the Civil Service – but all those selected had to be robust, be prepared to spend their lives on the frontier, and have the human skills – leadership ability, diplomacy, character and impartiality - as well as a deep interest in the people and tribes of their Agency. As Tripodi remarked the British showed a healthy measure of curiosity regarding those they administered.¹¹⁰

Length of service was important. For example Cunningham spent well over 30 years of his service in NWFP. A Foreign Secretary of India, Harcourt Butler, once remarked "we want lean and keen men on the frontier, and fat and good-natured men in the [Indian] states."¹¹¹ There was a mix of those who predominantly had "field" skills, and those who additionally had academic and analytical skills. The latter group could be employed more widely at the top levels of the bureaucracy and in executive posts such as Governorships and important Resident posts.

This is not to negate the problems in the Foreign and Political Department – there were many.¹¹² Many in the Indian Civil Service (ICS) regarded the politicals poorly, but this may have been elitism and "looking down" on a service which took a

¹⁰⁹ There were exceptions – for example some politicals believed that the Army's influence became too strong in Waziristan in the 1930s.

¹¹⁰ Tripodi, *Edge of Empire*, Conclusion Chapter, 390.

¹¹¹ Creagh Coen, *The Indian Political Service*, 37. Also cited in Tripodi, *Edge of Empire*, Chapter 1, 54.

¹¹² Tripodi, *Edge of Empire*, Chapter 1, 55.

significant proportion of its initial intake from the Army, rather than (as the ICS did) recruiting its entire executive stream direct from the British universities.

In order to “know” a people, the British insisted on language skills. George Roos-Keppel was obviously an extraordinary Pashto linguist, and Caroe (as well as a great linguist) was an extraordinary scholar of the Pushtun people – with “a prose style at once elegant and lapidary.”¹¹³ With the politicals, prior to 1901 they had relied on interpreters, but the Department grew concerned about the interpreters’ involvement in local intrigues. Linguistic ability then became an important entry requirement. Therefore, there was initial probationary training, and an entrant had to pass demanding Pashto examinations, including a practical examination consisting of lengthy interviews and cross—examination of tribesmen. The intention of the Department’s process was not “effortless fluency” but to enable the political officer to understand the subtleties – what the tribesman might imply but not state.¹¹⁴ In their demeanour with tribesmen, one young political officer was advised:

Never lose your temper, though you may sometimes pretend to lose it. If you want to be rude to someone never do it before witnesses. Frontiersmen have a powerful sense of *izzat* (honour) or *ghairat* (self-respect) and great harm can be done by wounding them unintentionally.¹¹⁵

Another set of advice from a Political Agent on one’s dealings with the tribes was succinct. It ran: never make an empty threat; never make a false promise; and always resolve disputes and matters in accordance with tribal custom.¹¹⁶

Another notable linguist among the politicals was Humphrey Barnes (Political Agent in South Waziristan, 1934-39), who was also a brilliant mimic and highly skilled in managing a jirga. Barnes was also fluent in Urdu and Punjabi. Jack Lowis (assistant political agent in South Waziristan, 1936-37) was also an excellent linguist - it was said of Lowis that he dreamed in Pashto.¹¹⁷

¹¹³ Geoffrey Wheeler, “Obituaries: Sir Olaf Caroe, KCSI, KCIE, DLitt”, *Asian Affairs*.

¹¹⁴ Caroe, *The Pathans*, 356-357. Tripodi, *Edge of Empire*, 63-64, 63n-64n.

¹¹⁵ Tripodi, *Edge of Empire*, 71.

¹¹⁶ Discussion with NDU students from KPK, Islamabad, December 2011.

¹¹⁷ Tripodi, *Edge of Empire*, Chapter 1, 67-68, 88-89. Lowis was later Political Agent, North Waziristan (1944) and District Commissioner, Kohat (1945-47).

Early in the officer's probationary period (which lasted three years), a political would be sent either to the NWFP or an Indian state for six months 'on the ground' political training. At the end of this they would undergo lengthy written examinations – for those going to NWFP on subjects such as: sub-continent history; the minutiae of British treaties with Afghanistan; geographical and topographical knowledge of the frontier from the *Imperial Gazetteer*; and knowledge of certain specified books of biography and strategy. Also in the probationary period they would study, and gain practical experience in, land law, legal codes and the Frontier Crimes Regulations.¹¹⁸

Other Tools - Allowances, the FCR and the Scouts

Whilst there were many approaches to governance, one of the tools the British used on the frontier was allowances, subsidy or bribery. The Political Agent would, at regular intervals, pay a subsidy to the tribes. Indeed, in Pushtun custom, foreigners who traversed the area were required to pay a form of subsidy in any event. The British also used the system in reverse. When there was "bad behaviour" by a particular group, the British would demand and exact "a fine", and use the threat of armed force to enforce this. Similarly the British used other economic tools: economic blockade of a tribal area, or *in extremis*, the destruction of economic property, and on the positive side, the awarding of contracts or the provision of employment, from the employment of village police to the granting of large-scale employment in road-building projects and the like.

The British, of course, developed a good intelligence system. They improved the system in the 1920s, achieving greater co-ordination and centralized assessment of material from the political officers, the police and the military. The British were not averse to what today might be called "information operations", and there were occasions where they "played one tribe off against the other". Even the British realized, however, that this could not be a long-term strategy, nor could they derogate from the central tenets of Curzon's system.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Ibid., Chapter 1, 62, 63-64, 64n, 65n.

¹¹⁹ Tripodi, *Edge of Empire*, Chapter 7, 307-313.

Part of the Sandeman system was allowing independence and autonomy for the tribes. An important part of this process was allowing the tribes to settle legal matters and disputes within tribal procedures. Additionally, for Sandeman in Balochistan, he did not want to have to apply the law of the settled districts in frontier areas.

The Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR) 1901 was part of the Curzon reforms. It gave greatly increased power to the Political Agent in a tribal agency. However, the original FCR had been introduced in the 1840s – in 1848 - when the British in India expanded their influence. The FCR was expanded in scope between 1871 and 1876, specifying special procedures for tribal areas – distinct from the criminal and civil laws elsewhere in India. These regulations were based on the idea of “collective territorial responsibility”, and they provided for the resolution of disputes to occur through a tribal council of elders (a jirga). The 1901 variant gave wide powers of judicial authority to administrative officials such as the Political Agent, and increased the scope of the earlier Regulations. The decisions of jirga and the Political Agent could not be challenged in other courts of law. The Political Agents, of course, dealt with the tribal leaders, or maliks.¹²⁰ Caroe reiterated that the Sandeman system had to uphold the authority of the chiefs and maliks, if necessary by force. The Sandeman system relied upon three things: penetration; concentration of force; and support for the maliks – (as Caroe stated) without these “the Sandeman system is the merest junk.”¹²¹

Although the FCR has been severely criticized, in the pre-1947 period it met British needs, and to a large extent, Pushtun needs. It was a matter of a legal system reflecting its society. As Caroe stated:

The point to realize is this. Pathan custom requires the satisfaction of the aggrieved rather than the punishment of the aggressor. The law as we understand it concentrates against the aggressor, and compensation for the aggrieved hardly enters the picture. The Pathan in fact treats crime as a kind of tort.¹²²

¹²⁰ “History of FATA”, www.fata.gov.pk/index.php?option=com-content&view (accessed 18 February 2012).

¹²¹ Caroe, *The Pathans*, 376.

¹²² Caroe, *The Pathans*, 355.

Finally, the British set up a system of armed force directly under the politicals, called the armed civil forces or the ACF. It had different levels, from the village to the frontier constabulary to the militarized formations such as the South Waziristan Scouts, Tochi Scouts or the Khyber Rifles. This gave the politicals the flexibility to use armed force directly, without having to go through the protocols of calling out the Army. It was not a pleasant solution or recourse, but it was highly responsive, and it gave the Political Agent's statements and promises validity and sanction.

After the experiences of 1919 in Waziristan, including what the British saw as mutiny and desertion, the British took some pains with the assembling of these forces. For example, Major Russell took a number of precautions when disbanding the South Waziristan Militia and raising the South Waziristan Scouts (SWS). Russell took certain precautions against mutiny, by adjusting its tribal make-up:

- Given the desertions in 1919, Russell would not employ any Mahsuds or Wazirs at all in the SWS.
- There would be a 2 to 1 ratio in composition: two cis-frontier Pushtuns for every one trans-frontier Pushtun in SWS.
- He retained the tribal companies – Khattak, Afridi, Yusufzai, Orakzai, Mohmand, and others – but only for administrative (not operational) purposes.
- Never again would a garrison or a post be wholly or mainly manned by men of the one tribe. Its force would be drawn from several of the administrative companies.¹²³

Civil-Military Co-operation

Co-operation between the civil authorities – the Chief Commissioner of NWFP and the politicals – and the British Indian Army was satisfactory and better run by the British than many comparable foreign governments and armies of that period. That is not to deny that problems did exist in the period from 1901 to 1939. Problems did exist, and “the soldiers” thought “the politicals” were weak, indecisive and favoured the tribes, and the politicals thought the soldiers were unsubtle, over-interested in

¹²³ Chenevix Trench, *The Frontier Scouts*, 53.

large-scale campaigns and garrisons, and lacked even rudimentary knowledge of tribal affairs, culture and politics, and had no understanding of Afghan and foreign susceptibilities. Both points-of-view were exaggerations.

Some clearcut cases of tension were when Curzon's blockade of the Mahsud in 1901-02 had to be supplemented with military action, and the ongoing disagreements over Waziristan in the 1920s and 1930s. However, these matters have to be seen in some perspective and, in terms of British interests and long-term strategy, the system worked relatively well. There was a mechanism for graduated response, with the armed civil forces under the Political Agent, and graduating where necessary to military control of certain areas when a campaign or expedition – from the British perspective – became necessary. Whilst Waziristan was a special case, even there major foreign war only occurred once – in 1919, and most of the blame for that initiation (including the Khyber offensive) lay with Afghanistan, not with the British.

When the British needed to intervene with military force in a substantial way – as they did in 1919-20 and 1936-39, they did so decisively, but they had “antennae” and were sensitive to when a finish to the conflict could be negotiated with the tribes. A so-called “military solution” and occupation over all of NWFP was never seriously contemplated after 1901, although portions of Waziristan had a military emphasis (but under political control) for certain periods in the 1920s and 1930s. Even there, the civil government sent some outstanding political officers into the two Waziristan agencies, and appointed some superb military officers (on secondment to the politicals) to command the ACF – the Scouts.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Henry Kissinger remarked that the conventional army loses if it does not win; the guerrilla wins if he does not lose. The genius of the British at that time – acting in their own self-interest - was to ruthlessly analyse the strategic problem they faced with foreign incursion or foreign influence onto the North-West Frontier of India, and to develop a “means” which satisfied the requirements of their higher policy and strategy, but enabled them to “risk manage” a series of complex tribal societies. For these tribal societies the British developed strong affection and empathy, and they studied the culture and learnt their language and dialects. Contemporary analysts refer to “non-kinetic means” and “non-kinetic warfare”. In an earlier time, the British emphasis was on what (today) we might call “non-kinetic means”. Our object in this concluding chapter is to analyse and summarise the elements of the thesis in the light of what we have observed of British practice on the North-West Frontier from about 1901 to 1939.

Good Analysis of the Problem within a Strategic Context of “Ends” and “Means”

In geo-political terms, the British had a problem. They had to limit the influence of Czarist Russia (and from 1917, the Soviet Union), and manage relations with the neighbouring state, Afghanistan. The British negotiated a border – the Durand Line – with their neighbouring state, Afghanistan, in 1893. At least as concerned Kabul, this gave the British some certainty if not necessarily permanent stability. It gave them access to the major mountain passes, and a sounder defensive zone incorporating the mountains. The problem then became – if Russian influence was now neutered or circumscribed by the arrangements with Afghanistan – how should the British “manage” the border and the border fringes, the zone where “difficult” Pushtun tribes inhabited. A border is a line on a map, and even if drawn with the most studious regard to ethnicity and topography, a border ultimately and by definition – is arbitrary.

In a spatial and graphical sense, the British (with Curzon, in 1901) decided to embrace ambiguity and permeability. To have fed more and more military units – brigades and divisions – into the North-West Frontier – would have been an exercise in attrition. Strategy is the art of understanding or determining the object – which must be political – and deriving from that certain conditions which must be achieved (political, diplomatic, economic, military, informational), and then translating that into achievable military objectives (and achievable sub-objectives in other areas, such as diplomacy and economy). Strategy, according to Field Marshal Alanbrooke, in its essence, is “pre-vision, pre-planning, and provision.”

The British and Curzon determined that the border must not be treated in an arbitrary, linear fashion, but as a more amorphous, permeable and cultural phenomenon. Curzon’s study of the frontier problem, and his consultation with frontier officers, convinced him that a separate border zone should be created, with a separate legal regime – appropriate to both Pushtun and British requirements – to be called North-West Frontier Province. The overt or over-dominant intrusion of the central government would be strongly resented by the tribes. Johnson and Mason (one a professor from the US Naval Postgraduate School, the other a retired US Foreign Service officer) have suggested that any attempt to “extend the reach of the central government” in Pushtun society is “precisely the wrong answer to apply to a highly developed culture in which ‘central government’ is anathema and reaction to it is insurgency ...”¹²⁴ Curzon could not have put the position more aptly.

Curzon, importantly, achieved British strategic objectives at reduced cost. The financial costs of invasion and occupation of the North-West Frontier, and long-term, permanent military garrisons, would have been unsustainable for the British or the Government of India.

The impact of colonial rule, and its inhumanity, has been studied by numerous academics. As Akbar Ahmad observed, the North-West Frontier was a place where

¹²⁴ Thomas H. Johnson and M. Chris Mason, “No Sign until the Burst of Fire: Understanding the Pakistan-Afghanistan Frontier”, in *International Security* (Volume 32, No. 4, Spring 2008): 54-55, belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/.../IS3204-pp041-077 (accessed 19 February 2012).

“myth, legend and reality” overlapped.¹²⁵ British civil influence (and military operations) had serious effects on the tribal societies, including large numbers of deaths and injuries when Army and RAF operations were being conducted. In the (civil-military) strategic context, however, that was not the point. The concern is to analyse the British approach in the context of its time, and in the context of (then) strategy and great power relationships.

Prior to Curzon, the British-Pushtun relationship might be characterized in a number of ways, including “military” or “guerrilla warfare” or “adversarial”. However, from Curzon’s time onward, at the top level, the British-Pushtun relationship was civilian (even diplomatic) in its essence, even if violence periodically reared its head.

Deep Knowledge of Civil and Military Officers of the Area, its Culture and its Languages

The British paid Pushtun society the compliment of close study and engagement, and they attempted to send as their representatives “on the ground” to Pushtun areas (as Political Agent or political officers) some of the finest products of their universities and their Army. Indeed, many of the politicals had spent their education studying Latin, Greek and classical history – they were imbued with notions of service, duty, *gravitas* and *civitas*.

The British developed a long-service cadre of political officers (the Foreign and Political Department, later known as the Indian Political Service), and men spent their entire working lives in administrative posts in NWFP. They rotated between the tribal agencies and the frontier districts. They developed “a sense” of what would work, and developed deep local relationships with the tribes, the maliks and their own armed force, the Frontier Scouts. The “all-rounders” amongst them – those possessing practical, analytical and strategic skills, reached the summit of the Government of India, either as heads of a Department in Delhi (like Caroe) or a Governorship (as both Caroe and Cunningham achieved).

¹²⁵ Ahmad, “An Aspect of the Colonial Encounter in the Frontier”, 1.

Whilst we should be wary of contemporary parallels, this depth of experience is not necessarily the situation today with western nations in Afghanistan. Although in a different country, elements such as the provincial reconstruction teams today do not have the reservoirs of experience such as the British developed in their political (civil) service in NWFP.¹²⁶

**Intelligent Application of Non-Military and Military Power and Influence,
including Periods of Intense Military Violence**

To use an unfortunate (if common) turn of phrase, “the dominant narrative” in British-Pushtun relations was civil and political - and not military, even if the military aspects garnered the greater publicity. Although many of the British officers did not like it, the British Army and the (British) Indian Army were subservient to the civil power. There were exceptions, and the civil side – the politicals – grew particularly concerned with the degree of Army influence in Waziristan, later in the period.

The tools of power and influence were numerous. On the civil side, there was the personality, character and language skills of “the political” dealing with the maliks and tribesmen. There was the system of allowances for the maliks. There were the Frontier Crimes Regulations, which allowed the tribe autonomy in imposing the law, and allowed the political or the Political Agent power through his ability to sanction (or otherwise) the outcomes within the FCR. There were the armed civil forces – from local policemen to the military sanction of the Scouts – as a graduated response.

On the military side – the application of military power - there were difficulties, but after a period of military operations the civil side would again take control and reassert primacy. The history of the period (1901-39) indicated it was not always “incessant disputes” between the British and the Pushtun tribes; “periodic” might have been a more apt description. Of course, there were also disputes between various tribes themselves. Even in Waziristan, there were no major military campaigns for an eleven-year period, from 1925 to 1936.

¹²⁶ This point, on lack of continuity of service, compared to the British practice before the Second World War, has been made by a number of analysts, including in broadcasts by the historian Niall Ferguson.

Internal to the military, the British had difficulty in retaining and propagating “lessons learned” from the frontier campaigns. This was particularly so during the First World War and its immediate aftermath, when British Army Territorial battalions were used in NWFP, rather than the long-service units of professional soldiers used in 1901-14, and in the 1920-39 period. Frontier (or mountain) warfare was a contest of soldier-on-soldier, where because of the harsh and precipitous terrain, the usual western advantage of “mass” was difficult to apply. One must never underestimate an adversary who understands the ground intimately, is fighting on their home terrain, has strong tactical abilities, and who can operate on light scales, without the drain of heavy logistics. Specialized warfare schools and effective and “absorbed” doctrine was essential for a western (British) army fighting in this context. The “moral” dimension also had to be understood, and the British did not always understand the “drivers” and belief systems at work on the frontier.

At the tactical plane, the British did become more adept at using and adjusting to new technologies, whether the Maxim gun or airpower, and integrating temporarily into “all-arms teams.” The British did develop, write down and teach “lessons learned” and new doctrine, even if not every unit or senior commander was able to adapt. The British were most successful when they did not set patterns, and when they surprised their tribal adversaries, for example by advancing on unexpected approaches or using night operations.

Even so, there was a failure at the military command level to learn lessons. The British official report of the 1919-20 Waziristan operations made it clear that soldiers must be highly trained, especially the infantrymen, in their basic skills, weapons training (e.g. fire discipline) and tactical training (e.g. use of ground), and the soldiers must be well-led by their commanders. Vital for success was the principle of war “surprise” – the initiative had to be wrested from the tribesmen, as well as the principles of “security” and “offensive action”. The key methods used in the 1919-20 campaign were: air operations; and later in the campaign, night operations, including night ambushing to keep the Mahsuds guessing. All ranks had to have an understanding of tribal tactics, the importance of not setting patterns, and operational security. By the time of the 1936-39 Waziristan campaign, the British had to re-learn many of these lessons. A British mountain warfare school had operated very

successfully for a short period. In this writer's view, these later British defects occurred because too much responsibility for training and doctrine was vested in "the chain of command" and unit commanding officers, and not enough was invested in Northern Command (and Army) training and doctrine systems.

But overall, the British developed a very good and intelligent application of non-military and military power. Their intelligence system, from the politicals, the military and the police was good, and became much improved from the 1920s onwards.

Workable Civil-Military Co-operation and Sound Administrative Structures

In this context, the British did have some effective antecedents. John Shy and Thomas Collier have remarked on the British approach to unconventional (and revolutionary) warfare (contrasting it to the French):

The British response had none of the ideological fervour of *guerre révolutionnaire*, but was instead more like that of their colonial tradition at its best: tight integration of civil and military authority, minimum force with police instead of army used when possible, good intelligence of the kind produced by "Special Branch" operatives, administrative tidiness on such matters as the resettlement of civilians in habitable, sanitary camps, and a general readiness to negotiate for something less than total victory. On the military side, British colonial experience showed again its capacity to train effective local forces, a patient view of the time required for success, and a preference for the employment of small, highly skilled troops in well-planned operations rather than the massive use of large numbers and heavy firepower.¹²⁷

Although there were miscalculations by both the civil and military sides, viewed as a whole, the forty-year period on the frontier for the British, from 1901 to 1939, viewed from the Government of India or London's perspective, was "success story" in civil-military co-operation. There were local resentments and jealousies, and there were periods of tension on the frontier, even a war in 1919, but overall it was a successful civil-military partnership. Of course, in those years the administrators of NWFP did

¹²⁷ John Shy and Thomas Collier, "Revolutionary War", in Peter Paret (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy: from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press (paperback), 1986), 854.

not have to accommodate the demands of (implemented) democracy and political parties.

The existence of North-West Frontier Province itself was a salutary reform by Curzon in 1901. This meant that frontier problems got immediate attention from the Viceroy's own Department, the Foreign and Political Department. It also meant that a specialized civil service could be set up, as well as locally appropriate laws.

Conclusion

The British approach to the North-West Frontier from 1901 onwards was fashioned by unsuccessful attempts at the border security of British India from the 1830s on. From 19th Century failure emerged a policy – successful for British interests – in managing a strategic problem and a fractious (to the British) and challenging people.

We often tend to characterize the historical British-Pushtun relationship as “what effect did it have on the Pushtuns?” We have attempted to describe many of those negative, and some positive, effects. In some ways the interesting question is “what effect did it have on the British?” The relationship had many effects on generations of British politicals, civil servants and soldiers and their families, many of whom had great difficulty in later relating to their home country after working for decades on the frontier, where they developed great interest and affection for the people of the frontier. Their service influenced British Army doctrine on ‘small wars’ (and later counter-insurgency doctrine). Their service also influenced how British civil servants and diplomats, and how British civil officers generally conducted their administration at other overseas posts and colonies, as well as the British responses to local nationalism in other colonies, and the process of decolonization and independence in the fifty-year period from 1947 to 1997 (with the relinquishment of Hong Kong).

The events and themes of the history of British administration of the North-West Frontier do not provide a hand-crafted solution either to contemporary problems of the war or terror, nor the local situation in Afghanistan. There are, however, some resonances which bear reflection in the contemporary context.

The British, from Curzon's time on, were ruthlessly pragmatic. Perpetual warfare was not an affordable or effective solution, so they had to secure and incorporate their key political objectives (border security of British India from foreign incursion) in the strategy, and jettison the over-expensive preferences. The British used diplomacy, with the Amir of Afghanistan, and made a careful calculation of the possibility of regional accommodations and engagement.

The British, by 1901, had made an honest assessment (to themselves) of the Pushtun people and the likelihood of peaceful occupation. They decided to take the tribes and the people "as they found them", rather than impose some utopian solution. The British fashioned administrative and legal structures, and civil-military solutions to fit the problem-set they faced. One factor the British "did get right", and which bears contemporary study, is that they developed within their civil and military services a strong cadre of Pushtun specialists, with language and cultural skills, and long-term experience with the people – not just short stints.

From the British experience, we can also deduce that not all sections "of a people" (or tribes) are the same. What worked for Sandeman in Balochistan will not necessarily work in Waziristan. The British did not initially study the differences intensively enough, between the different parts of the frontier. The British had, however, with their cadre of political officers, time to develop a depth of expertise on Waziristan as well as other areas. They had to adapt the Curzon system in Waziristan, and weight the civil-military equation more heavily towards the military side, for varying periods of time. Associated with this, the "tribal levy system", or co-option, will not always work effectively with each and every local area. The British learnt how restrict "the strategic space" of the Pushtun tribes, yet understood the culture sufficiently to permit tactical latitude for the "release" of surplus energy.

On the military side, the British learnt the hard way that mountain (or frontier) warfare is a specialized skill, which also requires the infantryman (and other soldiers) to be highly proficient in the basics, as well as being trained in mountain warfare and counter-insurgency.

However, in the principle of war of “selection and maintenance of the aim” - the British generally got it right. It was primarily a civil problem and they understood the bigger strategic picture; that NWFP was a means to an end. Military operations were not an end in themselves. Attrition and economic warfare were used by the British armed forces, but not as ends in themselves. There was just enough attrition for the “problem” tribe to return to the negotiating table, and for the politicals and the civil power to reassert control. Ultimately, the frontier had to be managed primarily as a civil problem, albeit with the Scouts and the armed forces in reserve.

In conclusion, the British did not have a happy experience on the frontier in the 19th Century. In the 20th Century, however, from Curzon onwards, they generally developed a correct approach which worked for British interests. They understood grand strategy, and developed a strategic approach which adjusted strategic “ends” with civil, diplomatic, economic and military means. The overall end was the security of British India from foreign government incursions. Overall, it was “the effective and calculated relation of ends and means to achieve policy objectives.”¹²⁸

In summary, from about 1901 to 1939, the British were successful strategically on the North-West Frontier of India because of: good analysis of the problem within a strategic context of ends and means; the deep knowledge of its civil and military officers on the region and its languages; workable civil-military co-operation and sound administrative structures; and the intelligent application of non-military and military power and influence, including the application of periods of intense military violence. This, of course, is measured in terms of British interests. We have also summarized and comprehended the history of the tribal disputes over that period, which were periodic rather than incessant, although more regular in Waziristan. The history is one matter, but one might have regard to the words of Lord Curzon on the frontier, unpredictability and the future: “I do not prophesy about the future. No man who has read a page of Indian [or rather, sub-continent] history will ever prophesy about the Frontier.”¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Tripodi, *Edge of Empire*, Conclusion Chapter, 401.

¹²⁹ Lord Curzon of Kedleston, *Speeches as Viceroy and Governor-General of India* (London: 1906), 43, quoted in Hauner, *One Man against the Empire: The Faqir of Ipi*, 17.

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